

# IRELAND - ITS HUMOUR AND PATHOS



BY

CUEY-NA-GAEL

ROTTERDAM - J. M. BREDÉE.

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IRELAND—  
ITS HUMOUR AND PATHOS

A STUDY

BY THE REV.

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Céad míle fáilte. Irish motto



ROTTERDAM,  
J. M. BREDÉE.

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TO MY FATHER

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Green, in the wizard arms  
Of the foam-bearded Atlantic,  
A melancholy isle,  
Enchanted and dreaming lies :  
And there, by Shannon's flowing,  
In the moonlight, spectre-thin,  
The spectre Erin sits.

---

She keenes, and the strings of her wild harp shiver  
On the gusts of night :  
O'er the four waters she keenes — over Moyle she keenes,  
O'er the Sea of Milith, and the Strait of Strongbow,  
And the Ocean of Columbus.

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And the Fianna hear, and the ghost of her cloudy hovering heroes;  
And the swan, Fianoula, wails o'er the waters of Inisfail,  
Chanting her song of destiny,  
The rune of the weaving Fates.

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Wail no more, lonely one, mother of exiles wail no more,  
Thy sorrows are the world's, thou art no more alone;  
Thy wrongs, the world's.

JOHN TODHUNTER.



# IRELAND — ITS HUMOUR AND PATHOS.

## Chapter 1.

### THE CONTRAST BETWEEN IRELAND AND HOLLAND.

Think of a country contrasting in almost every respect with Holland, and you have a good picture of the greater part of Ireland. .

There are, no doubt, some similarities between the Netherlands and the Green Isle, but on surface at least these are not very numerous.

In both countries you meet with a great deal of moisture. In Holland it exudes from the ground, or creeps along in slow canals; but in fair Erin it comes by way of the sky, either in fierce torrents or in a gentle drizzle — and so persistently that critics of the Hibernian climate aver that in Ireland it is always raining. This is an exaggeration; but a slight acquaintance with the country in a damp summer will enable

the casual tourist to account for this view.

Then both Ireland and Holland can boast of having great stretches of peat-bog, and of possessing languages in which gutturals play a not unimportant part.

Here the outward resemblances stop. In most other respects the countries are strikingly dissimilar, though no doubt there do exist subtle and curious affinities.

At all events the Irish labourer is a different sort of man from the Dutch boor. He is not industrious, not thrifty, and not calm; but on the other hand he is rather inclined towards new ideas. Patrick, the small farmer, lives in the midst of expedients and makeshifts, and possibly at no time has he what a Hollander would consider a complete outfit for his work. If anything breaks or wears out on the farm, he is in no hurry get it mended. He is not oppressed with the mishap, but just uses something lying handy and hopes for the best.

On a Dutch farmyard, on the contrary, unless one is greatly misinformed, everything must be in order. If a gate totters, that gate must come straight, or a new one put in its place.

Now the Connaught-man does not dream of such a thing. He puts a cart or a log of timber across the gap,

and feels that his carefulness leaves nothing to be desired.

Perhaps in nothing does the contrast between the countries appear more striking than in the conduct of the car-drivers.

The Irish jaunting-car is a surprising, two-wheeled vehicle, on which you sit sideways, facing in the scenery, with your back to almost everybody; and on which, when accustomed to the position and in good training, you maintain your equilibrium by means of your feet. Otherwise you hold on by the rail, or by the "dicky", as the driver's seat is called. Then all passers-by know you for a stranger and regard you with critical interest.

The man who manages one of these jaunting-cars is called a jarvey; and the jarvey's two great objects in life are, to go at as break-neck a speed as the abilities of his horse will permit, and to entertain the passengers with his conversation.

In Dublin, especially, the jarveys are astonishingly talkative, and tell the tourist who lends an ear to them marvellous stories about everything.

An English visitor driving past the Dublin Post-Office was puzzled by the three allegorical figures on the roof. "What building is that?" he asked.

"That's the Post-Office, yer honner," was the reply.

"And whose statues are those I see?"

"Oh them's the Twelve Apostles, sorr."

"Twelve — apostles! — why there are only three!"

"Ah; the others are downstairs sorting the letters, yer honner."

Now the jarvey is the last man ever to come to for information. If you betray interest in any thing, he will manufacture geography, history, statistics, and particularly biography, at a moment's notice. He regards himself in duty bound to keep you amused. When you begin to ask questions, he thinks you want entertainment, not facts. And entertainment you will get.

But we suppose ourselves to be out for a drive. Something gives way about the harness, and you come to an abrupt stand-still. Matters look serious when you see the horse shedding his trappings. But our driver is not in the least disconcerted. He jumps off his side of the car, whistling; and he informs you he expected this break-down anytime for the last ten days. He can't make out 'how the harness held together so long'! In two minutes he has all mended with a bit of cord; and you are bowling along merrily, at a terrific pace.

If any other misadventure occurs, he has another string, or a piece of stick, in his pocket to put all

to rights. He is never exacting and never at a loss. As befits man of infinite resource, he doesn't ask machinery or apparatus of any kind. You may indeed hear, when you reach your destination, that one of the wheels was loose all way that you have come, and that you have escaped destruction by about half an inch. Far from being ashamed of this, your jarvey glories in it as a triumph of engineering.

If you go for a walk in Ireland, no peasant will express the least surprise at your garb, though you were dressed like a Hindoo Rajah or the Inca of Peru. He will make way for you respectfully, and will agree to any remark you let fall about the weather.

If you meet a Dutch peasant, and say "Goeje morgen" at sunset, you do not expect him to reply "Goeje morgen". He will probably set you right with a disapproving "*Goejen avond, mynheer!*" But meet Patrick on the highway before breakfast, and say "Good night"; he answers promptly with hearty acquiescence, "Good night, Sorr." Even in pouring rain, if you come across a countryman drenched miserably, and accost him with "Fine day, Pat", he will reply at once, "Grand day, your honner; praise be to the saints!"

He does not want to talk folly; but he accepts



your standpoint, and sympathetically views the weather as you do. If you are pleased, so is he.

Then he is good at "blarney." Blarney is the easy use of jocular complimentary phrases, which may be intended, or may not, you never can know.

The origin of the term is curious. There is an ancient castle near Cork which contains a peculiar magic stone. If you kiss this stone, for ever after you have fluency of speech and a neat turn for compliments.

The jarvey, at all events, doesn't need to journey to Blarney Castle in the Country of Cork to get the use of his tongue. He has that by nature, and so ready is he with an apt and often flattering reply that you simply can never "corner" him.

The stories of jarveys are endless, and no doubt the best have never been told.

An old lady had called a cab in Grafton Street in Dublin, and in getting in found step high.

"Help me to get in, my good man," she said, "for I'm very old."

"Faix, Madam," was the gallant reply, "no matter what age you are, you don't look it."

Two English ladies who had been driving about Dublin all day to see the sights tried to puzzle the very obliging jarvey whom they had employed.

"Tell me now", said one of them, "which of us do you think is the older?"

With deep respect, but with just a hint of a twinkle in his eye, he glanced first at one and then at the other and answered with conviction: "Madam, *each* of you looks younger than the other."

Impudent however as these fellows are, they have genuine reverence for book knowledge and a great admiration for all that sounds learned. It is indeed odd how a countryman can often keep in mind some ponderous epithet he may have heard a couple of times.

A labourer was once charmed with the word "extinguish", which he had heard used with great effect by the village schoolmaster.

He inquired the meaning of the term and was told it was, "put out". To extinguish the candle, for instance, meant to *put out* the candle.

A couple of days later when a visitor and a pig simultaneously entered the peasant's cabin, he exclaimed in a grandiose way to his wife: "Judy, will you kindly extinguish the pig?"

This is a very old story, but a similar misuse of words was overheard not long ago when the Duke and Duchess of York were in Dublin. As they were



leaving, thousands of people turned out to see them drive to the steamboat, and to cheer them. In the crowd one old beggar-woman was heard saying: "Well, well, now; and isn't that a fine *reception* they're getting when they're going away?"

This love of learned terms is so deeply rooted in the peasantry that no countryman will ever confess he does not know a word.

Mr. Le Fanu tried the experiment on a boy in Killarney. He was sure the boy had never heard of a thermometer. So he introduced that word into the conversation — with astonishing results.

"Well, you have a lot of fish here I'm told?"

"We have, sorr."

"What sort have you?"

"Trouts, eels and all kinds, your honner."

"Any salmon?"

"An odd one, now and then."

"White-trout?"

"Any amount, of them, sorr."

"Any *thermometers*?"

"Them does be here too; but they come up *later in the season*. Yer honner might'nt find any to-day."

Knowing this foible an Irish student once worked

off a grotesquely Johnsonian sentence on a village ostler who came running out of the inn to take charge of the "*quality's*" horse.

"Peasant", cried the youth with mock-heroic stateliness, pointing to his pony, "Extricate that quadruped from its vehicle; stabulate him; devote to his nourishment a sufficient quantity of nutritious aliment; and when the Aurora of Morn again enlivens the oriental horizon, I shall reward you with pecuniary compensation for your generous hospitality."

The stable-boy rushed to his master in exstasy. "Master," he said, "come quick to the door, 'there's a Frenchman there, cursing *beautiful*.'"

As may be supposed, all this love of unknown idioms is accompanied by extreme simplicity.

It is a classic anecdote about the society lady in Cork, who sent a letter to the militia barrack requesting pleasure of Captain O'Hara's "company" to dinner.

There must have been something out of the way on the address, for the letter got into the hands of the men before it reached the gallant captain; and the hostess was electrified by some such reply as this: "Private Donaghy and Private O'Farrell present their regrets that they will be on sentry duty, and so cannot accept. But all the *remainder of Cap. O'Hara's*

*company* will be delighted to come this evening and dine with Lady Desborough."

An Ulster Scot, business-like and practical, was once travelling on a remote railway in the West when new hands were impressed into service as ticket-collectors. He was horrified to find that the raw youth who should have collected his ticket at a certain siding would not touch it.

"Take it, man", he said, "I must give it up here."

"Oi daren't touch it, sorr."

"What's wrong?"

"Ah sorr, look!" pointing to the time-honoured stamp on the ticket: *not transferable*.

"You see, sorr, Oi daren't break the rules! This ticket must *not* be *transferred*. You must always keep it, your honner."

The most extraordinary phase of this innocence is seen in the way in which the peasantry address letters.

They are afraid, unless they write down everything in detail, that the letter will go astray. They have absolutely no confidence in the country postal-authorities; and it must be admitted that their distrust is not quite without ground.

The manager of a Dublin Hotel is said still to

possess that famous envelope that came round a communication received by one of the servants in his establishment from her old mother in the far West. Tradition says that the superscription was something like this:

*For Bridgett Connolly*

at

*Reilly's Hotel.*

*All modern improvements. Electric Light. Lift.*

*Terms moderate. Garage. Omnibus to all trains.*

*Telephone: 1492.*

*Tariff on application to the Manager.*

*Sackville Street. Dublin. Ireland.*

The old woman having received an epistle from her daughter in Dublin, had scrupulously copied all the printed details which she found on the hotel note-paper — so as to keep the postman right.

It may be suggested indeed that this over-completeness of address is not confined to Ireland. An English visitor once staying at a certain Dutch village used to get his letters from England addressed to him in this style.

*R. Drinkwater, Esq., (of Gloucester)*  
*De Gouden Leeuw,*  
*Bonds-Hotel,*  
*Pieter de Hoogheplein, 2,*  
*Stalhouderij, Kinderspeelplaats en Uitspanning,*  
*Renkum, Stadsherberg, Holland.*  
*Vergunning. (Ten zeerste aanbevolen.)*

This traveller's correspondents, not knowing Dutch and unable to find any of the words on the map, thought it safer to put down everything. It transpired afterwards that they regarded "Stadsherberg" as a mountain range, and "Vergunning" (which was always very conspicuous and given a place of honour) as one of the Provinces of the United Netherlands. But one would hardly have guessed from the look of the envelope that Mr. Drinkwater was the strictest of total abstainers and a leader of temperance reform.

But to return to our Irish peasant's simplicity. Lady Dufferin (the diplomatist's mother, one of the "three beautiful Sheridans") has well depicted the

guilelessness of her lowly compatriots in a popular song. It is entitled :

"The Peasant's Farewell to his Betrothed on her Departure to England." Here are some of the verses spelled to show only a trace of the brogue.

So, my Kathleen, ou'yre going to leave me,  
All alone, by myself in this place!  
But, I'm sure you will never deceive me!  
Ah, no, if there's truth in that face.

Tho' England's a beautiful city,  
Full of illigant boys, oh what then?  
You won't forget your poor Terence;  
You'll come back to ould Ireland again.

Och, those English! — deceivers by nature!  
Tho' maybe you'd think them sincere,  
They'll say you're a sweet charming creature;  
But *don't you believe* them, my dear.

And when you come back to me, Kathleen,  
None the better will I be off, then!  
You'll be spaking such beautiful English,  
Sure I won't know my Kathleen again!



As this artlessness is well received, sometimes knowing boys assume an innocence they are far from possessing.

Two concert-singers of European name, who were on a tour in Ireland, drove on their arrival, from the steamboat landing-stage to their hotel by a jaunting car, to try how this singular conveyance felt. After some time the question of fares suggested itself, and one of the travellers consulted the other — in French — as to how much should be paid the driver. The other — also in French — replied "Three shillings will be safe enough!" As indeed it should have been, for it was twice as much as was necessary, the distance being short.

The car driver hearing them speak French, immediately said: "O beg yir pardon sorr, but Oi know what yez are saying; Oi speak French meself!"

"Oh, do you? Well, what did I say?"

"Ah, ye said kindly to the other gentlemin, 'Don't be giving that poor jarvey less than six shillings on that miserable cold day.'"

He got the money.

Many years ago an English clergyman had gone for a drive on a "long car." He inquired the cost of the entertaining run, and got the unexpected reply:



"Well, yir Reverence, the charge for *ordinary* fellows is just one shilling. For *gentlemen* it is two shillings. And I'll knock anybody down that says *you're* not a *gentleman*!" His Reverence could hardly do less than submit to the classification.

Assumed simplicity is not uncommon, and it can be deftly used on occasion by the peasantry to hide a trifle of knavishness. Of this Mr. Le Fanu relates many amusing instances.

An Irish landowner of his acquaintance had a splendidlooking cow, but she kicked so much that it took a long time to milk her. Indeed it was nearly impossible to get this operation accomplished at all.

So he sent her to the fair to get sold, telling his man to let any intending purchaser hear all the animal's faults. The man returned quite soon, with a surprisingly large price. The master asked in astonishment: "But, Terence, are you sure you told all about her wildness, you know — about her kicking so much?"

"Bedad I did, sir. He axed me, if she was a 'good milker'.

'Good milker is it'? says I; 'faix, your honner', says I, 'its what you would be *tired milking* her.' "

A feature of Irish life is the element of superstition that is encountered amongst the uneducated all over the country. Though occasionally harsh and unfeeling, these beliefs arise from a vivid, if sometimes mistaken, sense of the supernatural, and are mostly highly poetic. They are the survivals of an ancient nature-worship.

All over Ireland you will hear about ghosts.

Ghosts are supposed to be the spirits of the dead kept back by some longing, or affection, or by something unfulfilled. Thus if a man is sorrowing greatly for some one just dead, his friends will interpose, "Be quiet now: you are keeping him from his rest."

This is the origin of *Wakes*. These *wakes* (they are now almost things of the past) used to be weird meetings of all relatives of the departed, who sat up each night with the dead body and who kept up a round of artificial gaiety till the funeral took place. Such gatherings were no sign of fickleness or superficiality. They sprang from tenderness of heart and were intended to cheer the bereaved, and to prevent that concentrated grief on the part of the mourners which they thought might hold down the spirit of deceased in the earth plane.

Next to ghosts the chief matter of common

superstition is the Fairies. These are the "Good Folk", and were supposed to be fallen angels that somehow or other were not evil enough to be lost, and not good enough to be saved. Something in their lot related them to man, and they had great power over him. As a rule, however, they did not interfere, but they could do so; and it was most unlucky to speak about them. You can always see where they have been at night by rings of shamrocks in the grass; and wherever there was a flourishing rowan tree the fairies were never far off.

It is quite a study to know all about these fairies. Their shapes and colours, (for these vary with every hill) their tempers and their tricks, form a picturesque page of Irish folk-lore.

There are two special fairies, however, that cannot be passed by. One is the *Leenhaun Shee*, the Keltic Muse. She seeks the love of mortals, and if they listen to her, they are hers for ever. She is said to have kissed Carolan the Bard and Ossin the poet, while they slept in a meadow. Thus they had gift of song, but never knew true happiness again. There is much in this tradition that resembles the old-world story which Keats has embodied in his "Lamia", and in "La Belle Dame sans Merci."

But unquestionably the most fateful of the fairies is the Banshee.

The Banshee appears as a little old woman clothed in black. She has long flowing hair, which from a distance appears silver grey, but is dark red when you come near. Her face is so sad that you must weep even to look at it, and for a moment your heart stands still. She is the spirit of sorrow, as old as the world itself. Words has she none in the way of speech, but she goes from house to house in the darkness of the night and grieves for those destined soon to die. When Death is near any member of an ancient Irish family, she comes close to the window, and wails loudly three times and goes her way. And the sign, they say, never fails.

You will meet a good many peasants in Ireland who will tell you they have heard the Banshee, and some here and there who think they have even seen her.

But for comparatively few people does she make lament. She grieves only for the sorrows of the most ancient Irish houses, whether fallen on evil days or not. Mere wealth and social position she ignores; nothing will induce her to recognise them if the claims of long descent — of which she herself is

the judge — are wanting. Her contempt for the *nouveaux riches* is said to be profound. Consequently to have a Banshee attached to one's family is a social distinction second only to a patent of nobility.

There is a mysterious room pointed out in Dunluce Castle as the "Banshee's Chamber."

Dunluce Castle is a picturesque old ruin on a solitary rock off the Northern coast of Antrim, where it overhangs the restless surges of the Atlantic, rising and falling, blue black and menacing, far below.

This room, which juts out over the waves, is always swept clear. There the Banshee lives, crouched at night in a corner and invisible by day. If you scatter straw or sand on the floor, it is always gone in the morning. Fairy hands have brushed it carefully away.

But the Banshee doesn't like this disregard for her home. You mustn't play the trick too often, else you may arouse her anger, which is quick and terrible.

Such are some of the beliefs of the common people, beliefs they hold side by side with their religious creed. For they are very religious and strict to monasticism in matters of morality.



They are a race of dreamers and poets, and one is sure of a welcome from Fair Head to the Cove of Cork, if one can only appeal to their imagination.

Here indeed we meet the first element we need to take into account in looking at the Irish people — an element which we may describe as love of the wonderful and the mysterious.

It shows itself in many forms, from an interest in science and inventions up to the most vivid belief in the supernatural. And nowhere is there more habitual respect shown towards religion, or more reverence for the dead.

Conjoined with this element there is another, which affects both Humour and Pathos. This is an impulsiveness and excitability which finds expression in many odd ways, and has given Irishmen the name of being fickle as well as responsive. This idea, however, rests on a misapprehension. Ready sympathy is found everywhere, and sometimes it is so quick and vehement as to look like changeableness.

Certainly Irish people are most eager to lend an ear to new schemes and plans, and even to go some way in adopting them. But they are not chargeable with fickleness, as generally understood; and in the matter of their affections and religion they have always

shown a marvellous tenacity and strength of purpose. Perhaps these two primary traits — love of the wonderful and impulsive sympathy — are a heritage from the Tuaatha de Danaan, a people akin to the Ionic Greeks, who are reputed to have settled in remote times in Ireland.

But in any estimate of a people one has to take into account the kind of country in which they live and the sort of life they have passed in it. Thus we must glance at the geography.

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## Chapter II.

### THE EFFECT ON CHARACTER PRODUCED BY THE COUNTRY ITSELF.

The traveller in Ireland is not long in discovering that there is something mysterious in his surroundings. The country produces a strong effect on the impressionable. On some it seems to cast a spell. No doubt the character of the landscape, with its delicate tinting and amazing cloud-effects, in a measure accounts for this. There is some witchery in the light, a shadowy elusiveness in the very air, that makes the scenery one continuous appeal to the imagination.

The clouds hang round the hills and rise and float away — all of a sudden — giving us unexpected golden hours.

The winds are sometimes boisterous, but hardly ever bitter; and there is an inexpressible sweetness about the soft west wind that prevails for most of

the year. But for all the air is pleasant, there is a touch of sadness in the happiest landscape.

This gloom we might expect in the vast flats of the interior — those plains of peat-bog that stretch out, dark brown, to the horizon, ribbed here and there with gorse in spring, and a-glow all autumn with the heather's purple bloom.

There is melancholy enough there, when the grey clouds settle down; but when they lift and the sunlight falls on the heather wastes, it is almost worse.

Though the larks sing their cheerful song, there is a lonely bird that haunts these wilds, a kind of yellow-hammer, with the saddest note imaginable, like the cry of a lost soul; and when it flits from point to point, singing its despairing little dirge, and when you look out over the great sombre plain, with the violet cloud-shadows drifting across it, there is a beauty in the desolation that is well nigh intolerable.

These black plains are intersected by black rivers and black canals, where a sail is never seen; and here and there we come upon a sudden lake, inky in hue, so that one is not surprised to hear the peasants tell of an opening there down to the Underworld: or to read legends of the Middle Ages that

refer familiarly to Lough Derg as the gate of hell. "Patrick's Purgatory" is the name popularly given to a lake in Donegal which, during the dark ages, attracted the notice of all Christendom. From all parts of Europe pilgrims flocked to this most dismal and dreary region, the mystic theatre of spiritual punishment. "It was almost inaccessible," says Dr. Campbell in his Ecclesiastical History, "being approached through deep glens and rugged mountains, frightful with impending rocks, and the hollow murmurs of the western winds in dark caverns, peopled only with such fantastic beings as the mind, however gay, is from strange association wont to appropriate to such gloomy scenes."

It was of this place that Moore wrote his poem beginning:

I wish I was by that dim lake,  
Where sinful souls their farewells take  
Of this vain world, and half-way lie  
In Death's cold shadow, ere they die.

Where, come what might of gloom and pain,  
False hope should ne'er deceive again!  
The lifeless sky, the mournful sound  
Of unseen waters, falling round—

The dry leaves quivering o'er my head,  
Like man, unquiet even when dead—  
These—ay—these should wean  
My soul from Life's deluding scene,  
  
And turn each thought, each wish I have,  
Like willows, downward towards the grave.

These strange waste places are for the most part in the interior of the island, but when one comes towards the coast-line, all is changed. There it is truly the famed "Green Isle." There it is diversified by ranges of bold hills and smiling valleys. Perfectly sheltered, these deep hollows among the hills are exquisitely wooded, and are nearly always fertile. There is hardly any winter along the western sea-board, and the summers are mild.

The Gulf-stream keeps the Atlantic from ever growing chill. In Galway, for instance, the most delicate can often bathe in the sea in February, and a little later on, in sunny nooks in Connemara, the children would be able to gather primroses, white violets, and the blue-eyed gentian.

On the South West coast, there would not be a dozen uncomfortably warm, or distressingly cold, days in as many years, and the cattle in the South

are often out of doors all the year round. Perhaps it is an exaggeration, but it is claimed that there are more people over eighty, in good health and vigour, in Ireland than anywhere else.

The weather beguiles one out of doors even in rain; and as it is never hot enough either to exhaust the pedestrian or to allow the loungee to sit long, one is led to do a good deal of walking or cycling or driving. While this is conducive to cheerfulness, it begets also an intimate sense of nature, and it allows nature in its many contrasts to stir the imagination.

Regarding the scenery of Kerry, Macaulay writes: "The mountains, the glens, the capes stretching far into the Atlantic, the crags on which the eagles build, the rivulets brawling down rocky passes, the lakes overhung by groves in which the wild deer find covert, mark this most beautiful tract in the British Isles.

"When the sun shines out in all his glory the landscape has a freshness and a warmth of colouring seldom found in our latitude. The myrtle loves the soil. The arbutus thrives better than even on the sunny shore of Calabria. The turf is of a livelier hue than elsewhere; the hills glow with a richer



purple; the varnish of holly and ivy is more glossy; and berries of a brighter red peep through foliage of a brighter green."

James Anthony Froude is a severe critic of things Irish, but he writes: "When all is said about its wrongs, miseries and crimes, Ireland is still the most beautiful island in the world."

And no one who has seen the sun set in Galway Bay, can forget the magic splendour of that pageant. The sky is ablaze to the zenith with a thousand different tints; and the long, slow rise and fall of the transparent billows, that sweep in from America, break the reflection fantastically on that glowing wide expanse. The peculiar charm of the sunsets off the Western coast is referred to, again and again, in Irish Literature. Moore had this scene in view when he sang:

How dear to me the hour when daylight dies,  
And sunbeams meet along the silent sea,  
For then sweet dreams of other days arise,  
And memory breathes her vesper sigh to thee.

And, as I watch the line of light that plays  
Along the smooth wave to the burning west,  
I long to tread that golden path of rays,  
And think 'twould lead to some bright isle of rest.

But when you stand on one of the Twelve Pins of Bunabola, or on the naked escarpment of a Donegal headland, another sight meets the eye. Look at the cliffs seaward, buffeted ever by Atlantic gales, and you would think you were at the end of the world — so piercing, so appalling is the desolation. Look landward, and you have at your feet some richly-tinted, sheltered valley, such as might be supposed to lie in the bosom of the lost Atlantis. For it is off this coast that the fabled island sank, which Plato writes of in the *Timæus* — the Island of Happiness and Immortal Youth. And still the peasants tell that, on soft summer days when the winds are low, the shadowy outline of the lost island rises into view.

Still as of old the distance beckons — the Infinite, the Unattainable — that awakens a sympathetic throb in every Keltic heart.

On the ocean that hollows the rocks where ye dwell,  
A shadowy land has appeared, as they tell;  
Men thought it a region of sunshine and rest,  
And they called it Hy-Brasail, the isle of the Blest.

From year into year on the ocean's blue rim  
The beautiful spectre showed lovely and dim;



The golden clouds curtained the deep where it lay,  
And it looked like an Eden — away, far away.

The productions of these romantic districts have an interest of their own, but it is not always connected with romance.

All along the coast vast quantities of seaweed are burnt into hard cindry masses called *Kelp*, a material of much value for the manufacture of iodine. The vivid blue smoke of the kelp fires, rising here and there against the cliffs, gives an odd foreign touch to a whole landscape.

But still more uncanny is the working of a *still*, which emits its curling white fumes amid the heather, as *poteen* is being secretly distilled.

*Poteen* is whisky that has paid no duty. There is a heavy penalty on its manufacture, if the culprits can be found. The authorities use all their ingenuity to catch the law-breakers; but in these wild mountains their apprehension is almost impossible, and gallons of poteen are regularly smuggled from certain districts into the neighbouring towns. The rocky promontory of Innishowen in the North of Donegal once enjoyed an unenviable fame in this respect. Illicit stills were kept going all over the headland,

and the fiery liquor made its way mysteriously into the shebeens (or inns) of Londonderry and elsewhere. The gaugers were long nonplussed, but at last suspicion turned on a notorious *squireen* who used to drive into Londonderry, every fortnight, with his wife, to whom he seemed much attached. Indeed, as he rattled past the police-stations, he was observed to be curiously solicitous for her comfort, as well as affectionate. She was always muffled up to the eyes; a thick comforter was swathed around her jaws; and the whole structure — she was a tall woman of ample proportions — was crowned with a more tawdry bonnet than the peasants usually affect. She sat in haughty silence, never condescending even to nod to the policemen, who occasionally searched the cart for concealed barrels.

At length her extreme dignity and her husband's exaggerated show of affection gave the revenue officers a clue. "What's wrong with the wife?" they asked one day.

"Tooth-ache, yer honner", said the squireen. "Let her alone, the poor crayture can't spake a word". And he talked so sympathetically about the miseries of having to face the dentist that he was allowed to pass.

But when he appeared a week after, seated beside the same proud country-woman, who was speechless as ever, but more carefully wrapped up, it was clear that he had ventured once too often.

"Shure the wife's not bad again, is she?" said the constable ironically, as he stopped the cart.

"Whist, whist", answered the smuggler with a glance at his immobile companion, whom he was supporting tenderly with one arm, "She's had a little drop too much."

But the sergeant had commissioned one of his men to give the horse a sudden touch of the whip, and when the horse plunged, the muffled up figure fell with a metallic clang on the pavement.

It was a tin vessel, with a neck and round top, dressed elaborately in a peasant woman's Sunday finery. As the poteen poured forth from its broken receptacle, the affectionate husband was marched off between two policemen. "Never mind yer wife, she *had* a drop too much! But we'll take care she doesn't get any more."

Despite the intemperance in Ireland, a sad survival of reckless old customs, in no country, perhaps, is there more enthusiasm for total abstinence, and teetotal societies abound.

Indeed, in this matter, as in so many others, there are sharp contrasts on all sides. People's moods rise and fall; and too many of the peasantry fly to intoxicants to dull the edge of their woes. Happily, temperance reform flourishes at present (1909) in a way unknown since the days of Father Matthew.

A great work is being done, in spite of the fact that habits of conviviality are notoriously hard to root out amongst a race so social, and talkative and responsive as the Irish. Whether this quick friendliness of theirs, that leaps so easily "from grave to gay", is the outcome of sympathy merely, or has somehow been intensified by a fickle climate and a land full of contrasts, is an interesting problem.

The author of the "Irish Melodies" probably thought that the people were moulded by their surroundings, and that nature gives us the clue to a temperament.

Erin! the tear and the smile in thine eyes  
Blend like the rainbow that hangs in thy skies!

It cannot be more than superficially true to say that the dramatically uncertain weather — it is wise to carry an umbrella most days of the year — and the

wealth of contrasts in which the island abounds, keep Patrick ever on the alert and make him ready for emergencies. But the parallel exists between the *Ésprit Irlandais* and the climate in which it is nurtured. No matter how much rain there is, the blinks and flashes of sunshine are never long absent; when they do come, they are worth waiting for, so fresh and ethereal are they. And if these unfailing gleams that fall on glistening Irish hill-sides are represented in many a peasant's life by nothing more than the irrepressible quip or drollery, forgotten next moment, still the very badinage is bracing, and discloses the unquenchable hopefulness of the race.

This life is all chequer'd with pleasures and woes,  
That chase one another like waves of the deep—  
Each brightly or darkly, as onward it flows,  
Reflecting our eyes, as they sparkle or weep.  
So closely our whims on our miseries tread,  
That the laugh is awaked ere the tear can be dried;  
And, as fast as the rain-drop of Pity is shed,  
The goose-plumage of Folly can turn it aside.

Yet the undertone is sad, even apart from the effects wrought by Ireland's strange history.

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### Chapter III.

#### THE EFFECT ON CHARACTER PRODUCED BY THE HISTORY.

If the land has stamped its impress on its inhabitants, making them melancholy, imaginative, and lovers of nature, no less influence in other ways must be attributed to the history, which has been both turbulent and "distressful".

The early story of the country has hardly as yet been disentangled from legend. First came the Firbolgs, we are told. These were Phenician traders who occupied the land nineteen centuries before the Christian era. Then followed, in the 16th century B. C., the Tuatha de Danaan, who were Ionian Greeks and, for the most part, poets and magicians. Six centuries later, the island was overrun by an Eastern tribe of warriors who had been long settled in Spain. These were the Milesians, the ancestors of the Keltic Irish race. But the Tuatha de Danaan never lost



their hold on popular thought, and continue to affect Irish character to the present day. Hence the widespread interest in poetry and in things occult.

This is all tradition; but one may judge of this prehistoric period from its songs and laws and buildings, all of which present the investigator with riddles in abundance. The strange commingling of gaiety and sadness meets one everywhere. Three great songs have come down to us from that remote period, and they are said to be the most melancholy in Europe. There are "The Death of the Sons of Touran", "The Death of the Children of Lir", and "The Death of the Children of Usnack." The shortness of life, its tragic losses and dissatisfactions have formed the theme of Irish song from the first. Yet even then this people had a hopeful heart.

They have been always looking forward to some better time. Their music and their songs alike have the thrill of an undefined expectancy. Take the story of Fionnuala, for instance. Fionnuala was the daughter of Lir who by some supernatural power, was transformed into a swan, and condemned to wander, for many hundred years, over certain lakes and rivers in Ireland till the coming of Christianity, when the first sound of the mass bell was to be the signal

of her release. Moore has embodied this legend in one of his Songs and by the device of broken metre here and there, he suggested the hurried utterance that would seek to hide its grief.

## THE SONG OF FIONNUALA.

Silent, O Moyle, be the roar of thy water,  
Break not, ye breezes, your chain of repose,  
While, murmuring mournfully, Lir's lonely daughter  
Tells to the night-star her tale of woes.

When shall the swan, her death-note singing,  
Sleep, with wings in darkness furl'd?  
When will heaven, its sweet bells ringing,  
Call my spirit from this stormy world?

Sadly, O Moyle, to thy winter-wave weeping,  
Fate bids me languish long ages away;  
Yet still in her darkness doth Erin lie sleeping,  
Still doth the pure light its dawning delay.

When will that day-star, mildly springing,  
Warm our isle with peace and love?  
When will heaven, its sweet bells ringing,  
Call my spirit to the fields above?

The pensive tenderness of these verses gives only a hint of the Keltic longing for better days, but it shows how a legendary past can be connected with the future.

The ancient customs of the Milesians and their social system were, for that time, most peculiar; and Brehon Law anticipated some of the ideas of the Twentieth Century. The position accorded to woman was high; the wife was the equal of her husband; sisters were placed on a par with their brothers. It was then the golden age of music and song; and the bards and Druid-priests outrivalled the official kings in power. Reverence for womanhood and childhood, and awe in presence of the Unseen, were characteristics common to the hundreds of little septs into which society was broken.

But the great enigma that has come down to us from the early mythic period is connected with the buildings. The Round Towers are yet unexplained. It is even hazardous to surmise they had something to do with religion. They are lofty, hollow pillars of masonry ending in a cone. Inside these structures there are no stairs, nor is there any foothold on the top. Neither is there any provision made for signal fires to be kindled on them. It is hard to

see how they could be used by sentinels or by watchmen. Possibly they may have a purely symbolic meaning. The Phenicians — if the legend of a Phenician conquest can be trusted — may have built this kind of pillar here and there in an island where trees have never grown very high, to serve as a local and permanent *asherah* such as they made of bare tree-trunks in their own country.

The early story of "Scotia Major" (as Ibernica was first called) is not merely shrouded in mystery; it seems to consist of contradictions; and one is glad to reach authentic history at about 405 A. D., when St. Patrick appears on the scene.

Patrick was born either in Brittany or at Kilpatrick near Dumbarton, and in his sixteenth year he was carried captive to Antrim and sold as a slave. After six years he escaped and went to France. He was recalled to Ireland by a vision, and returning he laboured to his death for the conversion of the country from heathenism. Legends, both beautiful and grotesque, have gathered round the name of this patron saint, whose memory is treated with a sort of reverent familiarity as if he were a good-natured, gifted, elder brother. He is said to have founded 365 churches, baptized 12,000 persons, consecrated

450 bishops besides ordaining innumerable multitudes of presbyters! The coincidence of the number of churches with the number of days in the year awakens questionings in one's mind; but Patrick's story is authentic for all that — in its less marvellous features. He practically made the island Christian, and must have been a happy and singularly masterful spirit.

But his great fame in country-districts rests on his powers as a magician. One is never done hearing that he banished the snakes. By some charm or other — he was strong in charms — he drove them before him into the sea, and threw them in at Clew Bay.

The reptiles swam, of course, in the best of good spirits, round to England, where they have found a comfortable asylum ever since! So the peasants think, little imagining that the slight slur they fancy they are casting on Saxon England falls rather on Keltic Wales.

From Patrick's day to this, as a matter of fact, no snake or toad or poisonous insect can live in Ireland. Some people have, now and again, tried to introduce vipers. Why they should do so, it is hard to guess; but there is no accounting for tastes. In any case, the vipers always perished. If they had



not died a natural death, the peasants would make pretty sure the obnoxious visitors would not live long to sully the fame of the "Pathron Saint."

When St. Patrick was clearing the country, he might have removed the corn-crake. The Corn-crake is not a reptile or a poisonous insect; it is a bird. In England it is called land-rail; but the land-rail is a mild and amiable creature compared with its Irish relative. The Irish corncrake is able to make the nights of June more hideous than could any beast of prey; and it does. Its song reminds one of that instrument which the dustman employs in the morning to summon the tardy maid-servant. Or — to put it more accurately — it is like the spasmodic sharpening of a saw. Two rasping "crakes". Then a pause . . . You are just beginning to recover from the shock, when two more go off like pistol-shots! And so the concert goes on all night. They are finished ventriloquists — these corncrakes. Go to any part of the house you please, to escape the fusilade, it won't help you in the least. Close yourself up in the most distant bed-room and swathe your head in rugs, it is just the same. The voice of the charmer seems to come out of the middle of the floor, or from underneath your pillow.



Sanguine people have got up at midnight and gone out to hunt the ventriloquist off the premises. But this is great mistake, for you cannot locate the noise. You only make your serenader nervous. He hurries up a little, and you get twice the number of pistol-shots in the time. All night long he sharpens his saw under your window and he and his friends answer one another, discuss politics, sing choruses, and play at permutations and combinations — which is a mathematical game of his own invention to strengthen his lungs. One bird at a time. — Slow gatling gun: “Rasp—RASP!” Then two birds at a time “Rasp—RASP!!..” “Rasp—RASP!!! — Then five at a time. — Then seven.. eight — all frightened. Suddenly a panic-stricken silence! Not a whisper. After three minutes, an inquisitive “Rasp?” a mile away. Da Capo until dawn.

Nobody has yet been met that can sleep on untroubled when the “crakes” strike up their full orchestra. This they generally do in the leafy month of June, when the moon is bright, and they keep up this “Paddy’s opera” until about three in the morning, when the unwearied musicians reluctantly desist. The bird itself is rarely seen. It feels itself to be the enemy of man. It is a yellow, miserable-looking

object. It won't fly, but runs through the grass like a greyhound, and it "crakes" in staccato derision at you the moment it gets out of sight. "*Ay tin' bacon!*" he says. At least so the peasants tell us, and they should know. This creature is a genuine Irish grievance. There ought to be an Anti Corncrake League. One need hardly mention that the bird itself has never got into poetry. Wordsworth once sang the praises of the Cuckoo; Keats addressed an ode to the Nightingale; and many a bard has glorified the Skylark. But no one has ever written an "Ode to the Corncrake." This, it must be admitted, is ungrateful, for many an ode has the corncrake addressed to mankind. The very name "corncrake" is considered to imply everything that is grotesque and absurd.

This circumstance throws light on a practical joke that has become historic.

Many years ago when Lord Carlisle, then Lord Lieutenant, was down in the West opening a new railway, a London reporter was making elaborate notes of the ceremony for his own paper and for a Dublin daily. He had got the names of most people of distinction from Mr. Le Fanu, who was standing beside him; but he wanted more. "Who is that?"

said he pointing to the Reverend Archibald Craik, a youthful divine of majestic bearing who was in the Viceroy's suite. "Hush!" whispered Le Fanu, "that is Mr. Craik, the Lord Lieutenant's Chaplain."

All was duly entered in the note book.

"Can you tell me his — er — ah — Christian name?" continued the inquisitive reporter.

"Corn!" said Le Fanu impatiently.

So next day when the Dublin papers gave their great account of the 'splendid inauguration' of the new line of railway in blare, several had this queer statement: "Among the distinguished visitors we were glad to notice the Reverend Corn Craik, Chaplain to His Excellency at Dublin Castle."

Before leaving Saint Patrick one must not forget that he gave Ireland its national emblem, the shamrock. This delicate little trefoil — not to be confounded with ordinary three-leaved clover — he plucked and showed to the Pagan Princes to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity. But the same trefoil held in a beautiful child's hand is an ancient symbol of Hope, — a fitting presentation of the national spirit. On the shamrock, Moore has written some of his witty society verses. He finds the emblem an apt one for Ireland and incidentally pays himself a neat compliment.

Through Erin's Isle,  
To sport awhile,  
As Love and Valour wander'd,  
With Wit, the sprite,  
Whose quiver bright  
A thousand arrows squander'd;  
Where'er they pass,  
A triple grass  
Shoots up, with dew-drops streaming,  
As softly green  
As emerald seen  
Through purest crystal gleaming.  
O the Shamrock, the green, immortal Shamrock!  
Chosen leaf  
Of Bard and Chief,  
Old Erin's native Shamrock!

Says Valour, "See,  
They spring for me,  
Those leafy gems of morning!"  
Says Love, "No, no,  
For me they grow,  
My fragrant path adorning."  
But Wit perceives  
The triple leaves,

And cries, "Oh! do not sever  
A type that blends  
Three godlike friends,  
Love, Valour, Wit, for ever!"  
O the Shamrock, the green, immortal Shamrock!  
Chosen leaf  
Of Bard and Chief,  
Old Erin's native Shamrock!

For centuries after Patrick, Ireland was the most peaceful country in Europe, and was known as "The Isle of Saints." It sent missionaries to the heathen in Britain and on the Continent. Hibernian orators say it would be the Isle of Saints still, except for the visitors that put in an appearance later.

That is perhaps doubtful. But, at all events, the visitors had unceremonious ways; and when they came, they stayed. First there were the Danes, who constructed the strange "raths" or mounds all over the border counties. Then came the Normans.

The Norman invasion of Ireland reads like a modern version of Helen of Troy.

It seems that the King of Meath had a young, beautiful daughter, by name Devorgilla. Now Devorgilla was fiercely beloved from her girlhood by

Dermot Macmurragh, King of Leinster; and she returned his affection. So when her father gave her in marriage to the aged O'Ruark, King of Brefni, Devorgilla was like to die; and when her husband was away on a pilgrimage she wrote to Dermot: "Dermot Dear, Come and steal me from the man I hate." Thus Dermot Macmurragh stole away Devorgilla, and all Ireland rose against him. Wherefore the wrongdoer, hard pressed, fled to England, and sought aid from Henry the Second. And Henry the Second's barons reinstated Dermot and his wicked wife in Leinster, and then took possession of the land. "Such'", adds the old chronicler, Giraldus Cambrensis, after telling this slenderly authenticated tale, "is the fickle nature of woman, by whom all evils in the world do happen and come, as may appear by Mark Antony and by the destruction of Troy." Giraldus is not alone in philosophising upon this incident; the opponent of the Saxon has always twitted England with her intervention on the wrong side. Indeed a vast amount of political capital has been made out of the legend, as may be seen from the last three verses of Moore's poem:



## THE SONG OF O'RUARK.

THE valley lay smiling before me,  
Where lately I left her behind:  
Yet I trembled, and something hung o'er me  
That sadden'd the joy of my mind.

I look'd for the lamp which, she told me,  
Should shine when her pilgrim return'd;  
But, though darkness began to enfold me,  
No lamp from the battlements burn'd.

I flew to her chamber—'twas lonely,  
As if the loved tenant lay dead;  
Ah, would it were death, and death only!  
But no, the young false one had fled.

There *was* a time, falsest of women!  
When Breffni's good sword would have sought  
That man, through a million of foemen,  
Who dared but to wrong thee *in thought!*

While now—O degenerate daughter  
Of Erin, how fallen's thy fame!  
And through ages of bondage and slaughter,  
Our country shall bleed for thy shame.

Already the curse is upon her,  
And strangers her valleys profane :  
They come to divide—to dishonour,  
And tyrants they long will remain.

But onward!—the green banner rearing,  
Go, flesh every sword to the hilt;  
On *our* side is Virtue and Erin,  
On *theirs* is the Saxon and Guilt.

This all happened in 1172, and Henry's barons, the Fitzgeralds, have remained ever since. But now they are the most pronounced of Irishmen. Ulster alone was unconquered by the English King.

So far for tradition. The facts of the case appear to be that Pope Adrian IV. had given Henry II. a Papal Bull of authority over Ireland; and it was only a matter of time till this monarch would seek to possess his estate.

These Norman-English colonists were not, indeed, of much benefit to England. They became *Hiberniores Hibernis ipsis* — more Irish than the Irish themselves. And if ever a rebellion was going on — which was rather the rule than the exception — it was these Norman-English barons that gave most of the trouble. They were invariably the ring-leaders in the insurrections, and they never gave in. Why was this?

That is not easy to determine. There has always been something rather mysterious about the charm Ireland exercised on all who settled on her shores. A spell seemed to be cast over their imagination. It is not enough to say the country was beautiful. It was something more. It won their hearts. Perhaps Leen-haun Shee whispers to the strangers! Then it is undeniable that the English made mistakes. England treated her own sons in Ireland more than shabbily. In 1367, fearful penalties were meted out to those Englishmen in Ireland that adopted Irish names or customs or costumes. That is, when they were caught. A special enactment was, indeed, provided that any English colonist who married an Irishwoman should first forfeit his estate, and later on, if he remained incorrigibly attached to his lawful wife, he was to be put to death!

One can fancy how an old knight, married to an Irish princess for some twenty years, would feel on being served with a summons in accordance with this Statute of Kilkenny of the Year of Grace 1367. Or what would a young knight think, whose intention it was to ride over to the neighbouring county in the afternoon, and sue for the hand of some blue-eyed Kathleen. How would Kathleen herself greet the

tidings? A better recipe for making rebels than this law of 1367 can hardly be imagined. The Fitzgeralds and all barons and knights of the Fitzgerald type were turned into loyal Irishmen on the spot. And rebellion became their favourite pastime for many a day.

Whether then, owing to the fascinations of Ireland or to the blunders of England, civic strife and rebellion never ceased for hundreds of years. Heroism and levity, hope and despair, surprising achievement and utter apathy lend to the confused and moving story of the time a haunting and poignant interest. Feud and insurrection, devastation and revenge, riot and bloodshed are words absent from hardly a single page; but on every page, too, there is a fidelity that never has been surpassed, and saintship, and patriotism, and the love that endureth all things, and death dared in a hundred forms for a good as yet unseen.

Both the new and the old Faiths had their heroes. The splendid audacity of Protestants outnumbered ten to one, their stubborn patience, and that tenacity that made the walls of Derry memorable, were balanced by the chivalry of a Sarsfield, and the devotion of the countless exiles that followed and fought for the Stuarts to the last.

It could not be but that the long years of stress should grave deep traces on the nation's character. The warfare of centuries taught the people that life, for most of them, must be precarious and full of pain. There were also adverse laws to be evaded by the great majority, and the necessity thus laid upon them sharpened their wits. It drew them together, too, and made them clannish, and it intensified, if indeed an intensification were possible, their love for the country of their birth.

And all this while the soul of the people struggled for expression in strange wild music; and the passionate distress of living found utterance in song. Mad, elfish strains, and lilt that seemed to come from fairyland, would alternate with the dirge and the *Keene* and the wail of the broken heart. The harpers were historians, and interpreted men and women to themselves. It was their great solace after the claims of the affections; and the piety that knits the years together for every one that feels, was exalted and hallowed by the ancient music of the race. The melodies have reached us from a remote antiquity, laden with the feelings of a forgotten past. Moore might almost have written of the collective memory as he did of the individual memory, when stirred by music.



When through life unblest we rove,  
Losing all that made life dear,  
Should some notes we used to love  
In days of boyhood meet our ear,

Oh! how welcome breathes the strain!  
Wakening thoughts that long have slept!  
Kindling former smiles again  
In faded eyes that long have wept.

Like the gale that sighs along  
Beds of oriental flowers,  
Is the grateful breath of song  
That once was heard in happier hours;

Fill'd with balm, the gale sighs on,  
Though the flowers have sunk in death;  
So, when pleasure's dream is gone,  
Its memory lives in Music's breath.

Music! oh, how faint, how weak,  
Language fades before thy spell!  
Why should feeling ever speak,  
When thou canst breathe her soul so well?

"It has been often remarked, and oftener felt,"  
writes Moore, "that our music is the truest of all



comments upon our history. The tone of defiance, succeeded by the languor of despondency—a burst of turbulence dying away into softness—the sorrows of one moment lost in the levity of the next—and all that romantic mixture of mirth and sadness, which is naturally produced by the efforts of a lively temperament to shake off or forget the wrongs which lie upon it — such are the features of our history and character, which we find strongly and faithfully reflected in our music; and there are many airs which, I think, it is difficult to listen to without recalling some period or event to which their expression seems peculiarly applicable.

“Sometimes, when the strain is open and spirited, yet shaded here and there by a mournful recollection, we can fancy that we behold the brave allies of Montrose marching to the aid of the Royal cause, notwithstanding all the perfidy of Charles and his ministers, and remembering just enough of past sufferings to enhance the generosity of their present sacrifice. The plaintive melodies of Carolan take us back to the times in which he lived, when our poor countrymen were driven to worship their God in caves, or to quit for ever the land of their birth; and in many a song do we hear the last farewell

of the exile, mingling regret for the ties he leaves at home with sanguine expectations of the honours that await him abroad—such honours as were won on the field of Fontenoy, where the valour of Irish Catholics turned the fortune of the day in favour of the French, and extorted from George II. that memorable exclamation, ‘Cursed be the laws which deprive me of such subjects!’”

But we return to our history, to note that the innumerable insurrections came to a crisis in 1798 when the Rebellion broke out.

It was headed, as usual, by men of English descent. Some of these were Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Theobald Wolf Tone and Robert Emmet. The latter’s story is the most romantic. Robert Emmet was a young idealist who was stung to madness by the injustice of the Penal Laws against the Roman Catholics. In spite of all efforts to dissuade him he headed a miniature rebellion and tried to seize Dublin Castle. It was all a piece of folly. He never had the least chance of success, and his handful of followers was soon scattered. Emmet fled to the Wicklow mountains, where he was safe; and at any time he could have escaped in the French privateer that was cruising in Wicklow Bay to carry him off.

Meantime his defence was entrusted to the great advocate, Curran, who could be relied upon to make out a good case for the hot-headed idealist. It was confidently expected that, when all the facts were known, the officials of the government would not press too hardly on the leader of this childish escapade; and the eloquence of the famous jurist would perhaps get the sentence on the offender reduced to an inconsiderable fine. Now it happened that Curran's daughter had been long betrothed to young Emmet — but without the father's knowledge. What Curran did not know, however, the authorities did; and they determined at one stroke to capture Emmet and to deprive him of his advocate.

They guessed that Emmet would hardly leave the country without trying to say "Good-Bye" to his betrothed. So they watched the lawyer's house; and when the boy-rebel left his hiding place and crept down in disguise, they allowed him to pass into Curran's garden, where they surprised the lovers together. This brought the whole Curran family within reach of the law; and of course it disqualified the lawyer from conducting the case. The next day Emmet was condemned; the day after, he was executed.

One of Moore's poems, "*Pro Patria Mori*", repre-

sents Emmet in prison on the night before his execution.

When he who adores thee has left but the name  
Of his fault and his sorrows behind,  
Oh! say, wilt thou weep, when they darken the fame  
Of a life that for thee was resigned?  
Yes, weep; and however my foes may condemn,  
Thy tears shall efface their decree;  
For Heaven can witness, though guilty to them  
I have been but too faithful to thee.

With thee were the dreams of my earliest love;  
Every thought of my reason was thine;  
In my last humble prayer to the Spirit above,  
Thy name shall be mingled with mine.  
Oh! blest are the lovers and friends who shall live  
The days of thy glory to see;  
But the next dearest blessing that Heaven can give  
Is the pride of thus dying for thee.

That was in 1803. Sarah Curran went to England where she became very popular. But her heart was broken; and in spite every care she pined away, and died.

Her death took place in 1804, in Sicily, whither she was sent in the vain endeavour to restore her drooping spirit. It made a profound impression far beyond Ireland, for Moore's companion song caused the tragedy to be widely known.

She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps,  
And lovers are round her sighing;  
But coldly she turns from their gaze, and weeps,  
For her heart in his grave is lying.

She sings the wild songs of her dear native plains,  
Every note which he loved awaking; —  
Ah! little they think, who delight in her strains,  
How the heart of the Minstrel is breaking.

He had lived for his love, for his country he died,  
They were all that to life had entwined him;  
Nor soon shall the tears of his country be dried,  
Nor long will his love stay behind him.

Oh! make her a grave where the sunbeams rest,  
When they promise a glorious morrow;  
They'll shine o'er her sleep, like a smile from the West,  
From her own loved Island of Sorrow.



Hundreds of Rebel Songs took their origin from the Rebellion. The most famous of these is, "*The Wearin' of the Green.*" As green was the colour of the Rebel Flag, the wearing of any article of dress of that tint was for a time construed as a sign of disaffection, and was strictly forbidden.

"The wearin' of the Green" was set to a pathetic, yet stirring tune, and became the Marseillaise of Ireland. It is conceived in a defiant spirit, and its bitter refrain:

They're hangin' men and women there  
For wearin' of the Green!

is still capable of rousing a Dublin audience almost to madness.

Penal Laws suggest O'Connell, who did the most to get them removed. O'Connell had a wonderful career. For years the South and West obeyed him as few kings have been obeyed. His greatest power was as a popular orator. He used to address crowds of twenty thousand and sway them apparently with ease. With a voice like a fine-toned, resonant bell he passed at will from farce to statistics, from denunciation to tenderness. For personal influence and



personal magnetism, few popular leaders can be compared with him.

Once, however, he almost met his match, though that was in the person of a notorious virago who sold fish. The incident has become quite classic, but is worth retelling.

This formidable fish-wife was the terror of Dublin by reason of her bad tongue. O'Connell was challenged by his fellow-barristers to meet her in her own haunts; and argue a point with her; when, they said, Daniel O'Connell, the great orator, would be outdone in fluency, and be helpless in her hands. Nothing loath, O'Connell accepted the challenge and strolled down to the quay to meet the scold. Before going he had taken the precaution of refreshing his mind on his old geometry books. On arriving at the fish stall he hadn't long to wait. Pointing to the specimens exposed for sale, he merely asked, "Are they quite fresh?" when a stream of invective met this simple question.

He waited till she paused, then responded playfully: "Ah! get away with you, now, for a talkative old parallelogram!" At once a tempest of her peculiar eloquence followed. It rained, hailed, stormed terrible words. At last she stopped for breath.

"Dear me," he said in a friendly bantering tone, "what a quadrilateral you are! — a sort of Binomial Theorem, indeed! Why! you're not much better than a Hypotenuse or an Isoceles Triangle!"

Livid and speechless, she choked for utterance and could find none.

"Woman dear!" he continued, rolling out his words with zest, "You don't know what a *parallax* you are making of yourself! Why a *rhombus* or a *rhomboid* wouldn't act as you're doing. Let me give you a piece of advice, now. Keep quiet, or you'll turn ito *parallelopipedon*, nothing but a *rectilinear parallelopipedon*!" But for his mathematics he would hardly have won the field.

By all the peasantry he was adored, and they lost no opportunity of doing him honour. Thackeray was greatly disgusted with this, when he was in Ireland; for he much disliked O'Connell. Now it happened that, just about this time, the General Post Office took to printing its initials, G. P. O., on all the carts and waggons, even on the mile-stones, that were the property of the Postal Department. Thackeray had not noticed this in England; or it may be that the Dublin Post-office were a trifle over-zealous; but the curious sign was everywhere.

letters printed even on wayside posts. At last he enquired of a jarvey, "What in the world are those letters I see so often — G. P. O.?"

"Oh, now; don't ye know? that's for '*God Preserve O'Connell.*'"

Thackeray entered it in his note book: and the explanation duly appeared in "Irish Sketches" — as "an example of the infatuation which possesses this nation for a blatant demagogue!"

Fortunately for the novelist the mistake was discovered in time before the final printing.

A good many queer ideas about Ireland have a similar origin. This sort of practical joke finds great favour with porters and car-men and the various people a tourist will meet about a hotel. This story suggests another, told also by MacDonagh, who relates the foregoing. It is about the ready reply which a peasant made to the magistrate when convicted of stealing a sheep. The countryman was caught driving off the animal; but as it was famine time, the magistrate wished to let him off easy. The sheep was one of a large flock belonging to the landlord of the district, Sir Garret Fitz Maurice; and all the sheep had Sir Garret's initials, in big letters, G. F. M., painted on them.

"You surely don't mean that you thought this a stray sheep? What did you think G. F. M. was for?"

"Thru for you, sorr, he had them letters on him, but I took them for *Good Fat Mutton!*"

All the time that Irish Ireland was stirred by O'Connell, Ulster was quiet. The people were Protestants, and the farmers had a kind of ownership of the land. In fact there was a dual ownership; and side by side were found landlord rights and tenant rights. This Ulster system formed the basis of all the great Land Acts of recent times. Its principle was formulated in the famous Three F's, by a clergyman of wide political experience. These Three F's are the key to all Irish Land Legislation. They are: Free sale, Fair rent, Fixity of tenure. All this is very sober and matter of fact and business like. But the Ulsterman is as much Scot as Kelt, and he has many of the characteristics of the Scottish Lowlander.

So far the results of the analysis are simple. The people of Ireland have a great natural love for the wonderful, and strong impulsive sympathies.

The land and its climate have helped to mould an impressionable people, making them melancholy, imaginative and lovers of nature.

Thackeray was much puzzled with the mystic

Irish History has been a succession of failures; but they have been splendid failures. And all that has sharpened the wit of the defeated for purposes of self-defence; it has deepened their sympathy for one another; and it has given a very peculiar character to their instinctive love of Home. It is this tenacious love of country which, after being smothered half a life-time in the heart of the exile, breaks out so strangely sometimes in far-off lands.

Grotesque often in expression, this emotion makes itself felt through many an extravagance. "I'd rather be a lamp-post in the city he of Dublin," said one, "than a millionaire in New-York!"

It is this that rings exultant in verses like Moira O'Neill's "I'm going back to Ireland in the morning."

But there is none of these sayings that has the same grim realism about it as a little song of Dion Boucicault's. It represents a peasant woman who has emigrated to distant Illinois, and has done well. She is very comfortable. She has far more than she ever hoped to have; and is far better off than she could have been at home.

I'm very happy where I am,  
Far across the say;



I'm very happy far from home  
In North Amerikay.

But something comes over her at times, a rush of  
regret, when she thinks of Ireland. Her sorrow awakes  
at night for the child that lies buried in the chapel-yard.

I lie awake, and no one knows  
The big tears that I've cried.

For a little voice still calls me back  
To my far, far countrie;  
And nobody can hear it spake,  
Ah — nobody but me.

There's a little spot of ground  
Behind the chapel wall —  
It's nothing but a tiny mound  
Without a stone at all.

It rises like my heart just now,  
It makes a dawny hill;  
It's from below the voice comes out,  
I cannot keep it still.

O little Voice! ye call me back  
To my far, far countrie;  
And nobody can hear ye spake  
Ah — O nobody but me!



## Chapter IV.

### PECULIARITIES OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION THAT LEND THEMSELVES TO HUMOUR.

We have seen that the fundamental characteristics of the Irish people — love of the wonderful, and impulsive sympathy — render them peculiarly impressionable to outward influences, and that these influences have not been wanting. The very contour and the climate of the Island has made its inhabitants melancholy, imaginative, and lovers of nature. The nature they loved was full of contrasts, proverbially changeful in its aspects, but ever wistfully attractive. The race moulded by these influences has retained an almost boyish hopefulness, which has not been quenched by the sadness, tumults, and oppressions of many centuries. Adverse conditions have but constrained them to be quick-witted, clan-nish, and fond of their home.

Now we speak of that mirthful element, or atti-

tude of mind, associated with the Irish character. Of the many peculiarities of thought and speech in Ireland that lend themselves to humour, not a few may be traced to the language.

The language of Ireland is English, except in the West and in the mountains, where the peasants still speak Erse. This Erse is essentially the same as Gaelic, but it differs widely from the Welsh.

There is a considerable ancient literature in Irish, consisting of Poetry, Legends, Laws, History; and the language is now being zealously studied throughout the country. Several writers who have made a name in English, publish their works now first in Irish, and are said to be well satisfied with the intelligence of their readers.

It is from the Erse that the national motto is derived. "Cead — Mille — Failthe" means "a hundred thousand welcomes to you!" The roots of the language resemble Latin and occasionally Greek, thus giving some support to the theory that the Milesians were indeed akin to the Ionian Greeks.

Though English is spoken almost everywhere, it is English with a difference. The ancient Irish language has affected the vowel sounds, the tone of voice, and the character of the thought. Erse is highly

figurative, and figurativeness clings to every Irishman's speech. It is moreover pictorial and intense, and it has coloured and tinted the English from East to West.

*The Irish Brogue* lends itself to sly banter or to various turns of wit.

This Brogue is not a dialect like the Lowland Scotch. It is not even an accent. It is really a peculiar cadence or inflection with a slight broadening of the vowels, and a strengthening of some of the groups of consonants.

The peasantry universally say *tay* for tea, and say for sea, thus retaining the pronunciation that was common in the time of Elizabeth. The lengthening of some words is compensated for by the shortening of others, and unemphatic particles are pronounced often with incredible rapidity. Next to the Brogue the most distinguishing mark is supposed to be the *bulls*, and it must be admitted that these abound.

But what exactly is an Irish bull? Mistakes are often made on this head, for it is by no means every absurdity that is to be ranked in this category. Firstly, a bull is not a mere faulty arrangement of words.

Ridiculous as such a blunder may be, at times, it belongs to a different order. "He blew out his

brains, after bidding his wife goodbye with a gun," wrote a hasty reporter once; but that is only a lapse in the matter of construction. A certain epitaph in an Ulster churchyard runs thus: "Erected to the memory of John Phillips, accidentally shot, as a mark of affection, by his brother."

Neither is it a misprint. An orator had once concluded with the words: "The power of the democracy can drag the mightiest potentate off his throne." What was his dismay to find himself reported as having said, "The power of the democracy can drag the mightiest hottentot off his throne"! Nor is it merely the wrong use of a word. "You may rely upon it", wrote a magistrate once; "I shall endeavour to put down all nocturnal meetings — whether by day or night!" Had you asked him what he meant by a nocturnal meeting by day, he would have been the first to laugh at his own folly.

What then is a bull? It is a confusion of expression owing to the desire to say two, or three, or four things at once.

So, a prisoner, defending himself before a magistrate against a great many charges, said. "Och, don't believe them, Sorr! Sure half the lies told about me isn't true."

The writer once overheard a farm-steward's daughter accounting for the absence of eggs one week : "Oh, Mistress, the hens is all done laying but one, — an' *she's done* too."

It is not the uneducated alone that are guilty of bulls.

Sir Boyle Roche was a gallant gentleman who won many laurels on foreign fields, but these were nothing compared to the fame he won at home for his flowers of speech. Speaking in favour of the Union, he said that one of its effects would be that "the barren hills would become fertile valleys."

In another debate he flared up, and retored vehemently ; "I boldly answer in the affirmative, *no!*" And he was known in a great flight of rhetoric once to refer to the "primeval forests of America where the *hand* of man had never set foot."

One of his bulls has become a sort of household word. He was defending the officer of the Irish House of Commons for failing to lay hold of a member that should have been arrested for breach of the rules of the House. The M. P. in question escaped behind the Speaker's Chair. "How", said Sir Boyle, "How could the sergeant-at-arms apprehend the honourable member in front, when he was advanc-



ing behind? Sure, no man could be in two places at one time, *unless he was a bird?*” Sir Boyle Roche’s bird is well known. If any one hurries you in Ireland, you have only to say: Do you take me for a bird, that can be in two places at the same time?

Some little time ago, one municipal dignitary in a provincial town having quarrelled with another, turned upon his opponent with a fine flow of rhetoric. “You absolute and nefarious spalpeen! you try to do harm, and ye can’t. Why you’re just like a bird of prey, with its *teeth* all *pulled!*”

This triumph of ornithology can rank with Sir Boyle’s.

Says W. H. Howe, in his “Irish Wit and Humour”, speaking of this Hibernian oddity of expression, “It manages to convey an idea fully; but, *in its haste to express itself*,—the metaphors get mixed, and the thoughts transposed or reversed.

“The thoughts which give rise to Irish fun have been compared to a crowd all trying to get out of a door at the same time, the result being haste, and want of order, and sometimes a spill. This arises, not from poverty of thought, but from a wealth of ideas which the impulsive nature of the Irishman is unable to control—so eager is he to share his thought with



another. For playfulness, for sarcastic keenness, for gracefulness, and for red-hot scornfulness, nothing is more effective than some of the examples of the wit and humour."

Many attempts to account for this peculiarity have been made. Sir Richard Steele, who was half Irish, was once asked why his countrymen made so many bulls. He replied—"It is the effect of climate, sir. If an Englishman were born in Ireland, he would make as many." If this were a good reason, an Irishman born in England should show some tendency to lose this characteristic. But instead of this, what do we find? We find the Irishman's words come true who said: "my lord, suppose I was born in a *stable*, that does not make me a *horse*." No, in the words of Colonel Saunderson, M.P., even when born in England, Paddy can say: "I was born Irish, *and have been so ever since*."

These Bulls are always good-natured, but that does not prevent their having point, and the perpetrator of a bull cannot by any means be attacked with impunity. A quartermaster in a regiment of light horse, who was six feet high and very portly — a perfect giant — was joking with an Irishman concerning the natural proneness of his countrymen

to make bulls. "By my word," said the Irishman, "Ireland never made such a bull in all its lifetime as England did, when she made a *light* horseman of you."

Sir Boyle Roche's verbal felicities were not quite the mere chance they appeared to be. His famous letter on a scrimmage, during the Irish Rebellion, is probably, for the most part, a piece of playful irony. He wrote to a friend in London a description of a by no means serious affray. The epistle is too long to quote; but some sentences in it have become in their way classic:

"My dear sir, — Having now a little peace and quietness, I sit down to inform you of the dreadful bustle and confusion we are in from these blood-thirsty rebels, most of whom are, however, killed and dispersed. We are in a pretty mess; can get nothing to eat, nor any wine to drink, except whiskey, and when we sit down to dinner, we are obliged to keep both hands armed; whilst I write this letter I hold a sword in one hand, and a pistol in the other. Last Thursday, an alarm was given that a gang of rebels were advancing hither, under the French standard; but they had no colours, nor any drums, except bagpipes. Immediately every man in the place, including women and boys, ran out to meet

them. Fortunately the rebels had no guns, but pistols, cutlasses, and pikes; and as we had plenty of muskets and ammunition, we put them all to the sword; not a soul of them escaped, except some that were drowned in an adjoining bog; and, in a very short time, nothing was to be heard but silence. I have only leisure to add, that I am, in great haste—Yours truly, Boyle Roche.

P.S. — If you do not receive this in course, it must have miscarried; therefore, I beg you will immediately write to let me know."

One's suspicion that the gallant officer was posing a little here, as a fabricator of bulls, is borne out by his reply to a nobleman of his acquaintance, that he did not care for. Here is the equivocal invitation that he sent: "I hope, my lord, if ever you come within a mile of my house, that you'll stay there all night."

The *Bos Academicus* is a shy creature, but very charming when it is met in its native wilds.

A much respected Professor presented his students with an exquisite specimen, for which they have been grateful ever since. One day, when a class was being questioned orally on Church History in presence of the examining committee, and when some men

were nervous, and all were supposed to be on their best behaviour, the monotony of the proceedings was lightened by the following dialogue:

Professor: "Where did Paul of Samosata die?"

"In Rome, doctor."

Professor: "How often was Paul of Samosata at Rome?"

"He was twice at Rome, doctor."

Professor: "Was it *on the occasion of his first visit* that he died, or on the occasion of his second visit?"

"It was on the occasion of his second visit, doctor."

"It was," said the doctor.

A roar greeted this, which the doctor did not at first understand. "Silence please!" he commanded; "this gentleman is quite right!"

The Bull even gets into official papers, to the delight of everybody except the writer.

A certain Hospital Committee was bent on drawing up a most complimentary report about the doctors. They did their best, but were not happy in the wording.

Here, in short, is what they said: "*Notwithstanding* the large amount of medical attendance, few deaths have occurred during the past year."

The eager Irish mind feels an almost irresistible inclination, at times, to paint the lily. One can well

imagine the lover hunting for fresh praises to heap on the fair Kathleen's head — and rather spoiling the compliments already paid. "Ah darlint," whispered one of these swains, "Its' yourself possesses all the qualities I admire in woman!" Encouraged by the way this scientific statement was received, he hastened to heighten the effect: "Every quality that's beautiful ye have — and far more!" No wonder the reply was: "You silly fellow"!

It was surely an Irish butler who, on being dismissed, was dissatisfied with the character for sobriety that his master gave him. "Ah, an' please yer honner, when you are about it, say that I'm *often* sober."

Perhaps the most philosophic bull ever uttered in Ireland, is to be found in the reply of a witness at the Parnell Commission.

Barrister: "So you ran away, when the pistol was pointed at you! Wasn't that cowardly, now?" "Yes; your honner. It was cowardly. But better be a coward for five minutes, than *dead all the rest of your life.*"

This flowery, ardent, poetical Erse has filled Irish-English with terms of endearment, which, however, can be used sarcastically on occasion. Lovers have a vast variety of expressions to choose from, and



these present every shade and gradation of meaning.

*Agra*: My Love.

*Mavourneen*: My own dear.

*Asthore*: O treasure.

*Savourneen Deelish*: Darling dear.

*Aroon*: My secret love.

And is not this a nice distinction: Gille — ma — chree (Brightener of my heart); Gra — ma — chree (Love of my heart); Cushla — ma — chree (Pulse of my heart)? Positive — comparative — and superlative, as it were.

The last is not at all an everyday word. It is reserved for special occasions. A good serviceable term for everyday use, however, is "*alannah*," which means "my beautiful." The writer has heard it used to a policeman! The guardian of the law was arresting an old beggar-woman, who tried a soft answer to turn away wrath. Fancy a London mendicant saying "My beautiful" to Constable Z 264, who has just issued a peremptory command to "Move on."

To balance the graceful amplitude of speech, and the honeyed phrases adapted for compliment and love-making, Irish-English is rich in proverbs, epithets and sententious sayings. "May your shadow never grow less!" and the elaborate "May your under-



taker never live through his teething!" are both meant as blessings; but "May you live to see your own funeral!" is the reverse. It is an indirect way of saying "May you be hanged!" Word-pictures and witty turns abound in the language, and are in daily use, and the quick fancy of the people coins new examples continually. As the love for wit and humour is universal, old and young, rich and poor, meet here on common ground, as do also the adherents of all creeds and of all political parties. Indifferent to the pleasures of the table — they are neither *gourmands* nor *gourmets* — the Irish people set a high estimate on entertaining talk, and that with them means primarily repartee, grotesque description, and the telling of mirth-provoking or moving tales. Whimsicalities alternate with discussion and eager controversy.

Partly owing to this rollicking temper with its propensity for making bulls, and partly owing to other causes, the Irishman is not always considered very trustworthy. Sometimes, indeed, one is told that it is only by chance that a native of the Emerald Isle stumbles on the truth. Well; there is no need, as the 'advocate for the defence' might say, to depreciate truth-telling in any nation; but we

must discriminate. The son of Erin will not dispute with us about the weather, when we 'pass him the time of day'. He knows we are not speaking as meteorologists, but merely showing him civility; and with civility he will meet us, though we ventured on the remark that it was freezing in August.

Then again, he is sympathetic — a circumstance that leads him, at times, to deviate from strict mathematical accuracy. "How far is it to Ennistymon?" asked a band of Galway pedestrians of a peasant. "How far?" he repeated, surveying the tired group of students, "Well; it 'll be about a moile and a haaf." It turned out to be a good eight miles. But he explained it afterwards on humane principles: "Sure, didn't Oi see you bhoys were toired out, an' Oi wanted to keep up your hearrt." This is what Matthew Arnold very touchingly calls the "Keltic revolt against the despotism of fact."

But the head and front of his offending is, that he is imaginative. Though he expresses himself in rhetorical tropes, he would be horrified and amused to learn that anyone took his utterances literally. "Are there any fish in that stream?" enquired a Saxon tourist. "Fish is it?" replied a youth; "It's just thick with them, like treacle. They're *tripping*

over one another." But this is just the Connaught way of saying, what in plain English would be: "Yes; it's a good trout stream."

A lady who had taken an interest in an unkempt beggar-boy, tells of the queer excuse he once made. "You're a good boy", she said; "to have washed your hands and face; but when you were about it, why didn't you wash the back of your neck?" His explanation sounds weirdly geographical: "'Twas too far *West*, me lady!"

Add to this figurativeness of speech a desire to be polite, and an eager manner; and all is told. Once we understand his peculiarities of diction, and that good-natured foible of his, in respect to emphasis, we shall find Patrick no less veracious than Giles or Sandy. That is to say, when party politics are not concerned. In a 'party-business' his conscience is often woefully elastic.

But this raises the question of social conditions, some of which, no doubt, in their way foster the love of fun. While society in Ireland shows certain peculiarities, due to race and history, its structure is much the same as in England, except that everything pertaining to learning or study or religion, stands relatively higher.

Commerce, on the other hand, does not possess any wide-spread fascination for the Irish mind.

A curious provision in the Irish Bank Bill of 1808 attests this national indifference towards details. A clause stipulated 'that the profits should be equally divided and the *residue should be given to the governor*'. Of course there are noteworthy exceptions all through the country to this common disregard for business. The typical Ulsterman is keen at a bargain; and Belfast is a most flourishing city, that stands first in the Empire in regard to its ship-building, and its trade in ropes and tobacco and linen.

The island is directly under the Viceroy, or Lord Lieutenant, who represents the Sovereign and holds his court in Dublin. Court etiquette at Dublin Castle very much resembles the etiquette in England, but there are some minute differences. Ladies on being presented to Lord Lieutenant do not kiss his hand; but the Lord Lieutenant greets them, or used to greet them, with a kiss on the right cheek. This ancient custom is somewhat repugnant to Irish sentiment, and sometimes there is a revolt. We are told that this took place once on the part of a young lady from Cork. This fair *débutante* seems to have been

imperfectly drilled in the details of the ceremony, and, entering at the tail of the procession, she had not seen what had happened when other young ladies were presented. So, when the Duchess of Leinster led her forward, she bowed deeply and prepared to withdraw. What was her consternation when His Excellency took a step forward and offered to give her the regulation salute. "Oh no!" she exclaimed indignantly. "That is a privilege reserved exclusively for Mr. O'Flaherty!" Mr. O'Flaherty was her fiancé.

The Lord Lieutenant is generally an English or a Scottish nobleman; but the judges are nearly always Irish, and nowhere will you hear more pronounced brogues than on the judicial Bench.

Renowned as they are for their sharp and witty encounters, the Bench and the Bar present, in great profusion, all the most characteristic shades of Irish humour. As barristers are practising repartee all their lives, they become remarkably dexterous in attack and defence. The Judge's position gives him great advantages for snubbing the barristers; but he rarely escapes with impunity. Inasmuch as legal custom demands that the barrister shall always use respectful phrases in addressing His Lordship, the contrast between the courteous form of words and their real



meaning is often highly entertaining. One of the best known of these stories — it is a very old chestnut — relates to Chief Baron O'Grady and the renowned counsellor Bushe.

Bushe was engaged in making an eloquent speech to defend a prisoner, when an ass began to bray loudly outside the court. The Judge interposed: "Wait a moment! (One at a time, Mr. Bushe, please!" Bushe said nothing just then. But when Judge was summing up, and the ass began to bray more loudly than ever, Bushe interposed: "I beg your pardon, my Lord! May I ask you to repeat your last words? There is such *an echo* in the court I couldn't quite catch them!"

Sometimes these sharp advocates meet their match in unexpected quarters, and a lumbering countryman who can give witty answers fills the court-house with delight. Once a blustering cross-examiner, who was making little headway with his case, said acrimoniously to the shy-looking witness: "You're a nice fellow!" The reply came smoothly and deferentially: "True for you, Sorr; I *am* a nice fellow! And, if I wasn't on my oath, I'd say the same of you!"

Perhaps the best retort of this kind ever heard in Ireland was that given by peasant, when he was

being asked to account for a pistol which was found in his possession. The Queen's Counsel wanted to cast suspicion on him, and began in a browbeating tone: "Come, Sir, in virtue of your solemn oath, for which you will have to answer *what* did you get that pistol *for*?"

"On virtue of my solemn oath for which I must answer," returned the witness placidly, in a slow sonorous brogue, "I got that pistol for . . . . for three shillings and nine pence, at Mr. Richardson's shop!"

Some occupants of the Bench are very severe and staid, and banish all pleasantries from the court; when anything absurd happens to *them*, it is greeted with enthusiasm.

One day a dignified judge of this type was presiding, when a trifling case brought up by a deaf old lady. This deaf octogenarian prosecuted her neighbour who had allowed her dog the free run of the old lady's flower garden. The whole question was so insignificant that the judge asked the old lady's barrister to 'settle the matter' privately with her neighbour. Would the old lady take small sum of money and drop the case? She didn't hear! The counsel shouted: "His Lordship wants to know

*what you will take?"* The phrase seemed familiar. She thought it meant refreshments; and at once said coyly, "Thank his Lordship kindly; and if it is no inconvenience to him I'll take a little *warm ale!*"

When innocent blunders blunders like that are so much enjoyed, one may imagine the delight which everybody feels when a stupid witness makes a clever retort. The encounter between Judge B'Brady and a certain slow countryman is justly celebrated. Judge O'Brady was little frowning man with a sharp tongue, and being irritated at the replies of a witness he took the man in hand himself.

"Look here now; answer quickly; was he a big man?"

No; yer honner; not at all. He was quite a miserable little creature, much about the size of yer Worship's Honour."

"Was he good-looking?"

"Quite the contrary; much like your Honner; but with handsomer nose."

"Did he squint?"

"A little, yer Worship; but not so much as yer Honner by a good deal."

"That'll do, my good man; you may step down."

Mr. Curran was addressing a jury at one of the

state trials in 1803 with his usual animation. The judge, whose political bias, if any judge can have one, was certainly supposed not to be favourable to the prisoner, *shook his head* in doubt or denial of one of the advocate's arguments. "I see, gentlemen," said Mr. Curran—"I see the motion of his lordship's head; common observers might imagine that implied a difference of opinion, but they would be mistaken: it is merely accidental. Believe me, gentlemen, if you remain here many days, you will yourselves perceive that when his lordship *shakes his head*, there's *nothing in it!*"

Here duels of wit in the Law courts exemplify the main characteristics of the Irish mind, and allow one to see the elements of the national humour. Two things are first observable — the striking use made of the unexpected, and the prevailing delight in the grotesque.

It is hard to say which element prevails; both are common. A quick and unlooked-for phrase used to be part of the stock-in-trade of the beggars, who, by the way, have become latterly so few in number that they threaten to disappear.

Thackeray used to tell of an experience of his with a beggar woman. When she saw him put his

hand into his pocket, as he approached, she cried out: "May the blessing of heaven follow ye all your life!" But as he only pulled out his snuff box, she immediately added: "And never overtake ye!" It was Sheridam that made the unexpected reply to two London fops that came to him to turn him into ridicule. One of these dandies was very sly, and the other was reputed to be very empty-headed. "Well, Sherry'", said the dandies; „We were just asked by some of our set whether you were more of the knave or the fool!"

"Well," rejoined Sheridam, taking an arm of each, "I'll tell you; I am *just between the two.*"

But neither the unexpected nor the grotesque is essential to Irish humour, frequently as they accompany it.

Its essence lies rather in its imaginativeness, in some figure of speech, or bold metaphor, made on the spot. And if we trace this imaginativeness back a little further, we shall find the seeing faculty is at the root of it. The Irishman thinks in pictures, reasons in pictures, and talks as though he were watching pictures. This will explain most of the peculiarities of his speech and all the aptness of his wit. It lives in the memory as a scene on the stage.



When Mr. Peabody, the Millionaire, visited the West of Ireland with John Bright, they went for a row on Lough Derg. On returning, Bright asked of some one, how much was the fare? and a policeman said:

"Seven and six pence; but some people give ten shillings."

Thereupon Mr. Peabody took three half crowns out of his pocket and gave them to the boatman. But the boatman spread them on his hand; and looking disdainfully first at the coins and then at the Millionaire, he exclaimed sarcastically, "*Paybody!* is that your name? It's '*Pay-Nobody*' you ought to be called!"

The name to him was no mere word; it presented to his imagination the splendid scene of a rich man profusely scattering coins round him, and paying everybody what they asked. As the rich man fell far below this pleasing standard, he seemed a just object of ridicule.

A similar quaint pictorialness of thought tinges both love-making and devotion. The clergy generally, and not least of all the priests, possess this imaginativeness and love of picturesque speech in a rich measure; and it brings them in touch with the young.

No one, indeed, in Ireland is too old, or too aristocratic or too pious to make a joke. And the teachers of religion are expected to take their part, lest they should appear sour or censorious. Alfred Percival Graves paints a common type in his Father O'Flynn :

Of priests we can offer a charmin' variety,  
Far renowned for learnin' and piety;  
Still I'd advance ye without impropriety,  
    Father O'Flynn as the flower of them all,  
    Here's a health to you, Father O'Flynn,  
    Slainté, and slainté, and slainté agin,  
    Powerfullest preacher, and  
    Tindherest teacher, and  
Kindliest creature in ould Donegal.

Och! Father O'Flynnny ou've the wonderful way wid you,  
All the ould sinners are wishful to pray wid you,  
All the young childher are wild for to play wid you,  
    You've such a way wid you, Father avick!  
    Still, for all you're so gentle a soul,  
    Gad, you've your flock in the grandest contrhol;  
    Checking the crazy ones,  
    Coaxin' unaisy ones,  
Lifting the lazy ones on wid the stick.

And though quite avoidin' all foolish frivolity,  
Still at all saisons of innocent jollity,  
Where was the play-boy could claim an equality  
At comicality, Father, wid you?

Once, the Bishop looked grave at your jest  
Till this remark set him off wid the rest;

“Is it lave gaiety

All to the laity?

Cannot the clargy be Irishmen too?”

Here's a health to you, Father O'Flynn,  
Slainté, and slainté, and slainté agin;

Powerfullest preacher, and

Tindherest teacher, and

Kindliest creature in ould Donegal.

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## Chapter V.

### PECULIARITIES OF CHARACTER AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS THAT DEEPEN LIFE'S PATHOS.

We have seen that in Ireland, landscape, climate and atmosphere alike possess an indefinable element of sadness. In all views that include distant mountains there is something fairy-like and unreal. A suggestion is there, never insistent but always unmistakable, of loss and tenderness and regret. Thus, as the people think and speak in terms of what they see, the mournful cadence of their speech can be accounted for, as by a law of nature. The traditional music of the race is mournful, often passionately so; and although many songs are sprightly and pathetically gay, let a man play them slowly, and he will hear a far-off calling from the past, or a wail from another world.

It was Thackeray who drew a parallel between the songs of the country and its typical landscapes. Speaking of Glendalough he says:

“The aspect of the valley is wild and beautiful, of course; but why try to describe it? I think the Irish scenery just like the Irish melodies — sweet, wild, and sad even in the sunshine. You can represent neither the one nor the other by words; but I am sure if one could translate ‘The meeting of the waters’ into form and colours, it would fall into the exact shape of a tender Irish landscape. So, take and play that tune upon your fiddle, and shut your eyes, and muse awhile and you have the whole scene before you.”

Associated with these wistful scenes are the mournful prophecies and legends that have been handed down for ages, and form still a sombre background in many a child’s mind. Here is the prediction of Eiré’s guardian angel. We give it, as versed by Aubrey de Vere.

“For ages three, without laws ye shall flee as  
[beasts in the forest:  
For an age, and a half age, Faith shall bring  
[not peace but a sword.



Then laws shall rend you, like eagles, sharp-fanged  
[of your scourges the sorest :

When these three Woes are past, look up, for  
[your hope is restored.

“The times of your woe shall be twice of your foregone  
[glory :

But fourfold at last shall lie the grain on your  
[granary floor.”

The seas in vapour shall fleet, and in ashes the  
[mountains hoary :

Let God do that which He wills. Let His ser-  
[vants endure and adore !

But of all the traditions that carry down unhappy memories into the present, the worst are those that encourage a feeling of fatalism, or that keep alive party spirit. The oppressive laws that provoked so many futile insurrections, are long gone. No country has been more generously treated in recent times than Ireland. Grievances have been redressed ; injustices that lasted for centuries have been swept away for ever. Large tracts of the Island are as prosperous as any part of Great Britain, and are beginning to be as thrifty. But the Past still lays a paralysing hand on other districts, and it still is true of the

Westerner and Southerner that he has more energy elsewhere than in his own land. Sufferings such as drew forth the impassioned protest of "Speranza" (Lady Wilde) on behalf on the peasantry after the famine of 1847, are now unknown.

Was sorrow ever like unto our sorrow?

Oh, God above!

Will our night never change into a morrow

Of joy and love?

A deadly gloom is on us—waking—sleeping —

Like the darkness at noontide

That fell upon the pallid Mother, weeping

By the Crucified.

Before us die our brothers of starvation :

Around are cries of famine and despair!

Where is hope for us, or comfort, or salvation?

Where, oh, where?

If the angels ever hearken, downward bending,

They are weeping, we are sure,

At the litanies of human groans, ascending

From the crushed hearts of the poor.

Happily these days can never return. Yet the influence of such periods still lingers on in the people's

recurring moods of apathy and of indifference to material concerns ; and, in rainy seasons, when the crops fail, there is much hardship along the Western seaboard.

Many years ago, during one of these occasional visitations of partial famine in Galway when, however, in addition to actual want, a serious epidemic of small-pox was carrying off the poorer inhabitants by the score, a certain student from the Black North (and a Protestant to boot) lost his purse containing all the ready money he possessed. As it had apparently either been dropped in the street — pickpockets are unknown in the West — or mislaid in some place of public resort, the student gave up all hope of seeing his purse or its contents again. It was in the depth of winter and exceptionally bitter. The papers of the time were full of appeals for help on behalf of the many victims of famine and disease; and the young man's friends gave him the cold comfort that he had contributed handsomely, though unintentionally, to a deserving cause ! Enquiries were in vain; all trace of the article had disappeared. Two days afterwards, the bursar of the college summoned the youth to his office, and presented him with the lost purse, with its contents intact ! A starving woman had found the purse on the Post-Office

floor, had carried it to her miserable cabin, and thence to the priest, whom she begged to read the name "on that bit of paper and give it back to whoever dropped it." The poor old creature — a grandmother in a hunger-stricken household — must have been under a strong temptation to keep the treasure-trove, which would have meant support for her whole family for the winter. And she must have been aware that she could have committed this theft with absolute impunity. Of course she was rewarded at the time; but the honesty of this famine-sufferer deserves to be long remembered.

Devoted family affection is a kind of religion all through Ireland. Thackeray writes: "We asked our car-boy how much he earned. He said 'Seven shillings a week, and his chances.' But he said in winter his master did not hire him.

"We asked him, was he married? and he said No, but he was *as good as married*; for he had an old mother and four little brothers to keep, and six mouths to feed, and to dress himself decent to drive the gentlemen. Was not the 'as good as married' a pretty expression? And might not some of what are called their betters learn a little good from these simple poor creatures? There's many a young

fellow who sets up in the world, would think it rather hard to have four brothers to support; and I have heard more than one genteel christian pining over five hundred a year. A few such may read this, perhaps; let them think of the Irish widow with the four children and *nothing*, and at least be more contented with their port and sherry, and their leg of mutton."

Such incidents are common enough in Ireland and call for little notice. The Pall Mall Gazette is our authority for a still more striking story of disinterested affection.

In a cabin on a hill-side, overlooking the Bay of Dublin, dwelt an elderly brother and sister. The man was helpless cripple, entirely dependent upon his sister's exertions; and on her death a car was sent from the poorhouse to bring him thither for shelter. The poor wretch clung to the only home he had ever known, and utterly refused to leave it, crying he would die if deprived of his "say air, and shut up within prison walls."

His loud lamentations had brought the priest and some of the neighbours to his side; and one of the latter, Maggie O'Flynn, felt a deep impulse of pity toward the unfortunate man. She was a single woman



of about fifty-five, of weather-beaten, and certainly not attractive appearance. She had acted as herd on the estate of a gentleman to whom her services were invaluable.

"Hould hard!" she said to the workhouse officials: "it's not Maggie O'Flynn that 'ull see a poor crayture taken to the poorhouse when she can give him a shelter. It's a corner and a welcome in me own cabin the unfortunate Mick Costiloe shall have."

But here his reverence interposed, and vowed he would allow no such scandal in the parish as an unmarried man and woman sharing the same dwelling.

"Shure, Maggie, you won't go back on your word?" implored poor Mick in despair.

Maggie hesitated a moment, then turning to the priest, said: "If there's no other way to save him from the poorhouse, yer Reverence, I'll marry him; and sorra a word will anybody be able to say against it then."

It was in vain that the priest pointed out the terrible burden Maggie was taking upon herself.

"It's for the love of God I'm marryin' him, and not to please meself," was the answer she returned; "an' sure the Blessed Virgin will never let me want for bit an' sup, where she sees me sharing it with the poor cripple that has nothin'."

The marriage took place; and until his death several years later, the kind-hearted Maggie O'Flynn carefully tended and supported the helpless paralytic in her own cabin.

✓In his "Irish Sketch Book" Thackeray with infinite zest relates the history of another indigent family, consisting of a widow and four girls, who took permanently to their home four more girls, acquaintances, to do them a service in trouble. Then a decrepit uncle was quartered on the establishment; while, to crown all, the whole ten — and the house was small — volunteered to look after a little English baby, whose mother was suddenly summoned to attend a dying relative.

"All honour," says the novelist, in one of his rare bursts of enthusiasm, "all honour to the widow's mite! How much goodness and generosity — how much purity, fine feeling, nay happiness may dwell amongst the poor whom we have been looking at!"

The pathos that is seen in Irish Literature draws its inspiration from this sympathy with distress; and there is something grotesquely touching in the prodigal hospitality and kindness that laughs at prudence.

Sympathy thus is the chief trait that brings out the pathetic side of life. A young woman describing

how good a mistress she had, explained herself thus: "Ah, if she murdered you, you couldn't help liking her." That kind of devotion is happily common enough. Only get a good servant, and he will follow you round the world, and slave for you, if need be, and do it all uncomplainingly, keeping you nobly entertained. The fountain of mirthfulness, in average cases of adversity, never fails; and neither old age nor poverty can quench the feeling of hope, and the desire to make others share it. It is this brave face put on the worst trials, that is so appealing and so characteristic. "Why, woman," said a dispensary doctor to an aged crony from the mountains who was getting something 'for the toothache'; "Why; you're losing all your remaining teeth." "Ah, honey!" she replied, "It's time for me to lose them when I've nothing for them to do."

Along with quick sympathy — with the wrong side, occasionally, — the trait that brings out the grotesque sadness of things in Ireland is the common tendency to idealise whatever is admirable. This goes often to great lengths. Fashions, and ceremonies are made much of; and the queerest results are brought about by the conflict between natural impulsiveness and reverence for what is regarded as 'good form'.

A horsedealer of Mr. Le Fanu's acquaintance had evidently received many letters from friends in America who all began and ended their communications with certain set phrases of good will. Wishing to hurry up a colleague in the horse trade, who was tardy about returning a loan, he penned a marvellous epistle, someting like this;

Honoured Sir,

I send you these few lines hoping that you are in the enjoyment of good health as I am, thank Heaven, at this present writing.

I write also to let you know that you are a disgrace to common society, an that you had better send me the money you owe me, at once. Send it at once, I tell you — or you'll hear more about it.

You're a regular Knave. Nothing less.

I remain,

Honoured Sir,

Yours affectionately

HORACE O'DONNELL.

That Patrick idealises learning is well known. But to show how deep and wide-spread this feeling is, we must quote Thackeray:

"The Cork citizens are the most book-loving men I ever met. As for the urchins I never saw such a collection of bright-eyed, wild, clever, eager faces.

I listened to two boys almost in rags; they were lolling over the quay balustrade, and talking about *one of the Ptolemys!* and talking very well, too. One of them had been reading in 'Rollin', and was detailing his information with a great deal of eloquence and fire. Another day I followed three boys, not half so well dressed as London errand boys; one was telling the other about captain Ross's voyages, and spoke with as much brightness and intelligence as the best-read gentleman's son in England could do. He was as much of a gentleman, too, the ragged young student; his manner as good, though perhaps more eager and emphatic; his language was extremely rich, too, and eloquent.

Apropos of the love of reading, Dr. Lever, the celebrated author of 'Harry Lorrequer; went into Dycer's stables to buy a horse. The groom who brought the animal out, directly he heard who the gentleman was, came out and touched his cap, and pointed to a little book in his pocket in a pink cover. "*I can't do without it, sir,*" said the man. It was 'Harry Lorrequer.'"



It is this idealising of everything pertaining to the intellect that gives big words their exaggerated value in the distressful country. It is recorded that the wildest indignation ever witnessed in a certain police-court was shown by a vendor of apples who brought a charge against a countryman for the use of strong language: "He went down, yer honner, fornenst the whole world; and called me an old, excommunicated gasometer.'" Running off with her stock-in-trade would have appeared a trifle compared with the utterance of these abusive polysyllables.

A Waterford coachman, who had picked up a few French phrases, was excessively vain of knowing them. Once, when driving across a ford he saw that the lady in the carriage was rather alarmed; so he turned to her reassuringly to say: "Never fear, me lady! But indeed, if you had a *faux pas* of a coachman instead of me, ye might be drowned."

As the prestige gained by using Latin is much desired by the unlettered, they will venture on the oddest tags that sound like larnin'. "So you're just come off the Fleetwood boat, yer honner. Well there's many likes the say; but that's not the way with me. I like to keep me feet on *terra cotta*."

At a certain boarding-house in the West, Thackeray

was startled to notice that the maid-of-all-work brought up the coals for which he had rung — in what, do you guess? Not a coal-scuttle, which apparently was mislaid. But on a china plate! It was in honour of the visitor, no doubt, and to give a certain 'style' to the establishment.

Ireland idealises womanhood, childhood, and the weaker side; and the popular instinct is to vote with minorities. It is a misunderstanding to allege that this is pure mischief. "What are your politics?" Patrick was asked on landing in America. "Me politics?" he replied. "Oh, Oi'm against the Government." That feeling, in its native innocence, is by no means a love of disorder: it is rather a perverted idealism.

The Irishman's true sentiments appear in a deep respect for womankind — so deep indeed that many of his critics protest that he is but a shy lover; losing his fluency when most he needs it. Then, as "never told is all forgot so soon", his very ardour militates against his success. However this may be, Irish heroines, such as those in Lever's novels, seem to be much more independent and mirthfully authoritative than heroines in general are. Furthermore, as in Ireland, obedience to parents is by no means an empty phrase, the enamoured swain's idealising

both of his filial obligations and of his romantic affection, may reduce him to a pitiful condition indeed.

Samuel Lover's "A Way Out of It." — and there are many poems of the kind — is much more innocently realistic than would seem at first sight.

"Oh, 'tis time I should talk to your mother,  
Sweet Mary," says I;

"Oh don 't talk to my mother" says Mary,  
Beginning to cry;

"For my mother says, men are deceivers,  
And never, I know, will consent;  
She says girls in a hurry who marry . . . .  
At leisure repent."

"Then suppose I should talk to your father,  
Sweet Mary," says I;

"O don't talk to my father," says Mary,  
Beginning to cry;

"For my father, he loves me so dearly,  
He'll never consent I should go —  
If you talk to my father," says Mary . . .  
He'll surely say — no."

"Then how shall I get you, my jewel?  
Sweet Mary," says I;

"If your father and mother's so cruel

Most surely I'll die!"

"Oh, never say die, dear," says Mary,

"A way now to save you I see; . . .

Since my parents are both so contrary

You'd better ask — me."

As to the national estimate of feminine ability, it is interesting to note that Irish universities were amongst the first that opened their doors to women the accord them the same rights as men.

On the literary side, this idealising of womanhood lends a special pathos to all stories of treachery or folly; and in practical life it goes for to banish unseemly talk. In Ireland, from end to end, you may mingle in holiday crowds without much likelihood of being shocked by base expressions. There is little or no coarse jesting. There is none at all among decent people; and these form the overwhelming majority of every rank and class. One is not surprised to hear that the social life of the Irish peasant is the purest in the United Kingdom, some say in Europe. The engaging gaiety of Patrick and Bridget, or of Terence and Kathleen, is all the more rollicking because it is so innocently childlike and pure-minded.

In his "Irish Spinning Wheel" Alfred Percival

Graves presents us with a happy lover soliloquising,  
in the broadest and most natural of brogues, upon  
his beloved's dexterity.

                  Show me a sight  
                  Bates for delight  
An ould Irish wheel wid a young Irish girl at it.  
                  O! no!  
                  Nothin' you'll show  
Aiguals her sittin' and takin' a twirl at it.

                  Look at her there,  
                  Night in her hair  
The blue ray of day from her eye laughin' out on us.  
                  Faix, an' a fut  
                  Perfect of cut,  
Peepin' to put an end to all doubt in us,

                  That there's a sight  
                  Bates for delight  
An ould Irish wheel wid a young Irish girl at it.  
                  O! no!  
                  Nothin' you'll show  
Aiguals her sittin' and takin' a twirl at it,  
                  See! the lamb's wool



Turns coorse an' dull  
By them soft, beautiful, wheeshy white hands of her.  
Down goes her heel,  
Roun' runs the wheel  
Purrin' with pleasure to take the commands of her.

Talk of three Fates,  
Sated on sates,  
Spinnin' and' shearin' away till they've done for me;  
You may want three  
For your massacree,  
But one fate for me, boys, and only the one for me.  
An' isn't that fate  
Pictured complete,  
An ould Irish wheel wid a young Irish girl at it.  
O! no!  
Nothin' you'll show  
Aiguals her sittin' an' takin' a twirl at it.

It is in an atmosphere of innocent geniality such as poems like this breathe, that the notes of tragedy and loss sound deepest.

The idealising tendency naturally reaches its climax in matters of religion and of affection for family and country.

“Indeed the country is full of piety, and a warm, sincere, undoubting devotion. Nor can anyone pass through the land without being touched by the extreme love of children among the people. They swarm everywhere, and the whole country rings with cries of affection towards them.” So Thackeray wrote about 1840, and his words are a true description still, and indicate how strong a hold religion and family affection have. Atheism does not flourish on Irish soil. Yet the idealising process, which is always at work, has sometimes in religion been concerned too much with the associations and concomitants of the Faith rather than with its essence: and thus it may have done something to embitter party controversy. But the spirit of devotion that the novelist found, is in every corner of the land.

And with it goes a love for Ireland, that idealises everything — scenery, traditions, music, and the very soil itself, which is esteemed as sacred. The old legends of the holy hills live on in Irish, or are woven into society verse, or are wedded, by poets like Moore, to the most moving of folk-songs.

Legends are even imitated or invented, and modern thoughts and ideas — though this is rare — read into them.

As an example of influence, an authentic legend may be noted. For better than a thousand years the story of Deirdre possessed an extraordinary charm for all classes; and it seems to have had pathetic hidden meanings, not a few.

This Deirdre was a maiden so exquisitely beautiful that King Connor Mac Nessa determined to make her his queen, when she would be grown up. But Deirdre preferred young Naisi, one of the sons of Usnach: and one day she threw him a rose. This bound him in honour to marry her: and though he knew that Deirdre was fated — so ran a prophecy when she was born — to bring ruin to her country and her lover, he carried her off to Alba. There by the banks of Loch Etive they were happy many a day, and the other sons of Usnach were with them. But King Connor sent for them at last and promised forgiveness. Now Deirdre feared treachery: but her husband and his brothers beleived the King, and they brought Deirdre back to Emania, for they loved their country and were glad to feel the soft wind against their faces again and see the green sloping meadows. But not many days after, the King sent his soldiers: and they slew the sons of Usnach, though they

fought long and bravely. And as the three brothers were buried together, Deirdre, alone now and friendless, would not be consoled; but singing her funeral song she threw herself into their grave and died. Her 'Lament' is a passionate dirge, which unites retrospect and prophecy and conjoins the idea of personal loss with undefined national disaster. This classic song of grief had been translated by Ferguson in verses beginning:

The Lions of the hill are gone,  
And I am left alone — alone:

Dig the grave both wide and deep.  
For I am sick and fain would sleep.

The falcons of the wood are flown,  
And I am left alone — alone:  
Dig the grave both deep and wide,  
And let us slumber side by side.

The song ends in an oracle that foretells the ruin of Emania. This is a very ancient legend: and in it, as is usual, love and patriotism are inextricably commingled. — In it, too, an instance of grotesque imagination. Speaking of the brothers it is said: sweet in truth was the singing of the sons

ot Usnach. The cattle listening to them, milked over two thirds more than their wont!

But later traditions abound, and fanciful tales are associated with every dune and strath and streamlet and lake.

Here is poem supposed to represent the lament of a Danish prisoner on the banks of Lough Foyle. The Heathen Olaf, — a Viking's son — was treated kindly by the Irish Princess. She taught him Christianity, and he was enrolled in her body-guard. But the Princess left Columkil and was made abbess of a convent a day's journey to the South. This convent was situated on an island in the river Foyle; and seeing that the river flowed past her dwelling Olaf used daily to speak to its waters and ask them if they brought him no news. For Olaf was passionately attached to her, and when she went away he became distraught, and his mind was filled with strange imaginings. Sometimes the river brought him consolation; but oftener it made him sad. By day he was put to labour in the galleys, or to toil in prison. But every evening when released from the oar, he would repair to the bank of the river and listen, as it flowed by, if it might bring him tidings of the Princess. But her he never saw



again. Yet when he died, his body was carried to the island which Princess ruled, and his dust rests beside hers in the 'Danish Rath.'

### THE LAMENT OF OLAF.

O soft south wind, awake and blow  
Adown the silver stream,  
Whose ripples glide, whose wavelets flow  
By the garden of my dream.

Waft me a sound, a whispered word,  
Bring me a touch, a sigh,  
From where the golden cloudlets burn  
Under that far-off sky.

The sky grows pale, the silent stars  
Gleam placid on the lake;  
Ah me! they gleam on prison bars,  
Here where I, dreaming, wake.

Awake, asleep, and in my dreams  
I cannot choose but see  
The same fair garden by the streams  
That linger wistfully.

No lotus there, or flagged festoon  
Of matted tropic reed  
Delays the current, as at noon,  
It laves that charmed mead.

No spell of old that water stays,  
It flows for ever on;  
And yet, I doubt not, there are days  
It waits before 'tis gone.

It waits, it watches by that marge,  
Which it kisses tenderly;  
Then sobs adieu — and speeds away,  
In sorrow, silently.

And when the moon lights up its waves,  
And stirs its yearning heart,  
Oh then, the maddened river raves  
And moans, when it must part.

'Tis so, I ween; for with mutters hoarse  
This river fierce and strong  
Keeps tossing sullen in its course,  
Protesting as 'gainst wrong.

Its grief I know; though it murmurs low,  
Disclosing reluctantly  
That incommunicable woe —  
*It left her yesterday. —*

Only too well do I know that song,  
Which the winding river sings;  
For no other thought than that thought, since long,  
To me every moment brings.

Yet were I that river, so strong and fierce,  
So fierce, unfettered, and free,  
I would rise in might in my channels and pierce  
To her feet resistlessly.

I would hem her round with a barrier high,  
With a wall of silver sheen,  
I'd wrestle with Destiny, Fate defy —  
*Never to leave her, I ween.*

I 'd raise a parapet high as heaven,  
Deep as my depths below;  
Yea, weave enchantments seven times seven,  
And hold her fast, I trow.

I'd steal her away to the far cold North,  
And hide her relentlessly  
In my heart of hearts, nevermore to go forth  
From that prison eternally.

Thou craven river! that fleddest away,  
Leaving my life behind;  
Streamlet unhappy! that would not delay  
To render me service kind;

Hateful waters! that do not dare  
To bear her again to me;  
Yet your arms still encircle that island fair.  
*River, I envy thee!*

As the idealising of the land, and everything belonging to it, is not confined to one sect or coterie, we have a double series of patriotic lyrics, some loyal to England and exalting Great Britain, others referring to Ireland alone. Wolfe's "Burial of Sir John Moore" is a striking example of the Irish poetry that breathes a genuine attachment to Great Britain, or, as we should now say, to the Empire; and there are many lyrics of the same stamp, for Irish soldiers have borne their full share in Britain's battles.

Samuel Lover says; "Ireland contributes to the lyrical celebration of England's naval glory also. "The mid Watch," by Sheridan, is of the first mark; Cherry's "Bay of Biscay, O" achieved great popularity; "The Boatman's Hymn" (a translation from the Irish) is full of spirit and originality; and last and greatest, is the Forging of the anchor," by Sir Samuel Ferguson — an ode of surpassing power and beauty."

After a picturesque and glowing description of all that might be expected from the anchor, which we watch being hammered out upon the anvil, the poet apostrophises the finished "shapely work", and in imagination follows it in its wanderings round the world, till the climax is reached and we see it drop down upon the ocean's floor, where some remains still linger of those that fought and died for Britain.

O Lodger in the sea-kings' halls, couldst thou but  
[understand  
Whose be those white bones by thy side, or who  
[that dripping band,  
Slow swaying in the heaving wave, that round about  
[thee bend



✓ With sounds like breakers in a dream, blessing  
[their ancient friend —  
O couldst thou know what heroes glide with larger  
[steps round thee,  
Thine iron side would swell with pride; thou'dst  
[leap within the sea!

Give honour to their memories who left the pleas-  
[ant strand  
To shed their blood so freely for the love of  
[Fatherland —  
Who left their chance of quiet age and grassy church-  
[yard grave,  
So freely for a restless bed amid the tossing wave.

As a contrast to this, not in spirit but in politics,  
we have to go back to the time of the Rebellion,  
and "The Memory of the Dead" is one of the most  
characteristic of the spirit-stirring songs of the period:

Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?  
Who blushes at the name?  
When cowards mock the patriot's fate,  
Who hangs his head for shame?  
He's all a knave, or half a slave,

Who slights his country thus ;  
But a true man, like you, man ;  
Will fill your glass with us.

We drink the memory of the brave,  
The faithful and the few —  
Some lie far off beyond the wave —  
Some sleep in Ireland, too ;  
All — all are gone — but still lives on  
The fame of those who died —  
All true men, like you, men  
Remember them with pride.

Some on the shores of distant lands  
Their weary hearts have laid,  
And, by the stranger's heedless hands  
Their lonely graves were made ;  
But though their clay be far away  
Beyond the Atlantic foam —  
In true men, like you, men,  
Their spirit's still at home.

This passionate love of country suggests a quite different kind of Irishman from the conventional type, admired of the caricaturists. Samuel Lover

points out that numberless songs written by stranger-hands used to pass current as Irish ; but that, being composed "on a foreign, false and exaggerated model," they depicted imaginary characteristics, — noisiness and inane rhetoric — with smart city-talk instead of kindly humour, and with coarseness and vulgarity as offensive substitutes for wit.

"Irish wit is fonder of moulding itself into mirthful than angry forms, he says, and it is essentially tender and sentimental. There are hundreds of poems, stories, and pictures that have nothing Irish about them but the name, and that in consequence have misrepresented the national spirit. What that national spirit is, cannot be seen in the pitiful stage-Irishman, with his outrageous garb, uncouth gestures and catch-words. Keltic speech is soft ; and the sense of the ludicrous and the pathetic reveals itself in delicate *nuances* of expression rather than in counterfeited jollity of demeanour. A loud, hectoring manner is considered in Ireland to be a sign of defective understanding ; and harsh contradiction and blunt positiveness are taboo. The degenerate Irish settlers in large cities have lost most of their national idealism, and they have acquired faults from their environment. Renan has pointed out that the race is fitted for

country life. "No race communed so intimately with the lower creation, or believed it to have so large a share of moral life. They have had a love of nature for herself, a vivid feeling for her magic, commingled with the melancholy a man knows when he is face to face with her, and thinks he hears her whisper to him secrets about his origin and his destiny."

Instead of the would-be smart "Paddy", recklessly flourishing a shillelah and posing as a buffoon, or the helpless rustic dazed with the first glimpse of city traffic, the genuine type must be recognized as the civil-spoken countryman with his wits about him, and with a great hatred for everything anti-social. Neither the stage nor the slums can give us the true picture. Here is something of the reality — a proof, says Lover, of the unquenchable affection which the peasant bears his native land. "A party of labourers had just arrived in the packet-boat from England, where they had been reaping the wheat-harvest, and crowded to the vessel's side, eager to jump ashore; and when they did so, they knelt down and kissed their mother earth." To them Erin becomes personified; she is their Beloved; she is *Granu Uile*, or *Dark Rosaleen*, or *Roseen Dhu* — the little dark Rose. Or, in homelier imagery but

as pathetically conceived, she is *Shan van Voh*, 'the little old woman', whose sorrows will one day be ended.

In his "Dear Land" Lord Chancellor O'Hagan has caught this spirit of devotion and commemorated it.

When comes the day all hearts to weigh,

If staunch they be, or vile,

Shall we forget the sacred debt

We owe our mother isle?

My native heath is brown beneath,

My native waters blue,

But crimson red o'er both shall spread,

Ere I am false to you,

Dear land—

Ere I am false to you.

When I behold your mountains bold—

Your noble lakes and streams—

A mingled tide of grief and pride

Within my bosom teems.

I think of all your long, dark thrall—

Your martyrs brave and true;

And dash apart the tears that start—

We must not *weep* for you,

Dear land—

We must not *weep* for you.



My grandsire died his home beside;  
They seized and hanged him there;  
His only crime, in evil time  
Your hallowed green to wear.  
Across the main his brothers twain  
Were sent to pine and rue:  
And still they turned, with hearts that burned  
In hopeless love to you,  
Dear land—  
In hopeless love to you.

What path is best your rights to wrest,  
Let other heads divine;  
By work or word, with voice or sword,  
To follow them be mine.  
The breast that zeal and hatred steel,  
No terrors can subdue;  
If death should come, that martyrdom  
Were sweet, endured for you  
Dear land—  
Were sweet, endured for you.

This is rather the language of a lover to his betrothed than that of the patriot to his country. But these ideas are associated in that Keltic thought which has had so profound an influence on English Literature.

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## Chapter VI.

### THE INFLUENCE OF KELTIC LITERATURE ON ENGLISH.

One would fancy that the influence of Keltic literature on English might be seen most in the field of wit and humour; but this can hardly be maintained. The apt and ready retort is no doubt reported; but the peculiar character of Irish wit has not spread far in Great Britain, nor has it influenced many English writers. Thackeray is perhaps the greatest English author who could reproduce at will the 'Irish atmosphere'. No doubt, the unexpected rejoinder finds a place in English novels, but the tendency is to make the retort sharp and biting, rather than amusing or naïve. Thus it cannot be considered Keltic. The following reply, though sardonic, has the Irish flavour; but, of course, the hard hitting is not meant literally. A public speaker

was once declaiming against the Irish people, as unfit for self-government.

They were not even honest, said the orator, who, it seems, when off the hustings, was a medical man with a moderate practice. "Prove it! prove it!" yelled his infuriated opponents.

"It 's not hard to prove it," he retorted, "I'll tell you what happened to me when I was practising in a slum district. Well, I had a hundred and fifty Irish patients on my books. Now out of that number how many do you suppose paid me?"

"We don't know. The whole of them very likely. Go on, and tell us. We'll take yer word for it."

"Only ten" said the doctor solemnly, "Ten!!" "Now," he continued tauntingly to his opponent, "can you explain that?"

"Ah — that's easily explained," said the countryman, "There was *only ten* of them hundred and fifty patients of yours that recovered!"

The roar of laughter that greeted this, brought the physician's political oratory to a sudden end.

Hibernian resourcefulness forms, indeed, a tradition in English literature, and many turns are given to familiar anecdotes of the great lawyers, or professors or divines.

A farmer attending a fair with a hundred pounds in his pocket, took the precaution of depositing it in the hands of the landlord of the public-house at which he stopped. Next day he applied for the money, but the host affected to know nothing of the business. In this dilemma, the farmer consulted Curran. "Have patience, my friend," said the counsel; "speak to the landlord civilly, and tell him you are convinced you must have left your money with some other person. Take a friend with you, and lodge with him another hundred, and then come to me." The dupe doubted the advice; but, moved by the authority or rhetoric of the learned counsel, he at length followed it. "And now, sir," said he to Curran, "I don't see as I am to be better off for this, if I get my second hundred again: but how is that to be done?" "Go and ask him for it when he is alone," said the counsel. "Ay, sir, but asking won't do, I'ze afraid, without my witness, at any rate." "Never mind, take my advice," said Curran: "do as I bid you, and return to me." The farmer did so, and came back with his hundred, glad at any rate, to find that safe again in his possession. "Now sir, I suppose I must be content; but I don't see as I am much better off." "Well,

then," said the counsel, "now take your friend with you, and ask the landlord for the hundred pounds your friend saw you leave with him." It need not be added that the wily landlord found that he had been taken off his guard, whilst the farmer returned exultingly to thank his counsel, with both hundreds in his pocket.

Stories of this kind abound, most of them being about Dean Swift, or about the oddities of the judges of seventy years ago.

But, on the whole Keltic humour has had more influence in America than in Great Britain; and, for the most part, it is only Irish puns — which are not very numerous — that have been imitated in England. Here is an instance.

A gentleman who frequently visited Ireland, and generally stopped and dined at the same hotel in Dublin, on his arrival one day, perceived a paper wafered on the looking-glass in the coffee room, with the following written notice: "Strangers are particularly requested not to give any money to the waiters, as attention is charged for in the bill".

The man who had waited on him at dinner, seeing him reading this notice, said: "Oh, Mister—sure that don't concern you, in any way. Your



honour was never made a *stranger* of in this house."

Examples of the Irish spirit of this kind can be found in Meredith and many modern English novelists, but to a smaller extent than might be expected.

Indeed the three great notes of Keltic literature are not humorous at all; they are melancholy and mystic. The first is the element of boundless regret. 'Keltic history is one long lament, recalling the race's exiles, its flights across the seas'. "The same man", says Dr. Douglas Hyde, "who will today be dancing, sporting, making merry, will be soliloquising by himself to-morrow heavy and sick and sad, making a croon over departed hopes, lost life, the vanity of this world and the coming of death". Thus Irish lyrics must bear the palm for depicting unhappy love. If Scottish lyrics are the most intense, surely the Irish are the most tender and regretful. In ancient Ireland love was deemed a fatal sickness; and many Erse love-poems, as Yeats has pointed out, read like death-songs. But the grief was hidden under a mask of gaiety. Once at the Queenstown landing stage an old Irishwoman had come to see her only son off to America. The poor creature was jesting and laughing and dancing about, here and there, merrily to the astonishment and indigna-

tion of an English friend who accompanied her.

"Bridget, Bridget, are you joking like that, and your son going away? Perhaps you'll never see him again."

"Whisper, darlint" said the old woman "Whisper! Its laughin' and jokin' I am, honey. But — it's *because I must'nt cry!*" It is this suppressed sorrow that gives a clue to the vast influence that the Keltic spirit has had in English. Another element that English literature owes to Keltic verse is the use of triple rhymes, and the general effect of a musical and arresting style. Matthew Arnold considers that charm of style is one of the notes of this ancient literature. However this may be, there is little doubt but that the Keltic peoples have brought into English an extraordinary sense of the mystery of nature. What Wordsworth taught the cultured, that is the natural inheritance of many an illiterate Irish peasant — a delight in the mystery and charm and magic of nature, and a boundless longing to commune with the

"Spirit that impels  
"All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
"And rolls through all things."

These characteristics are all found in a very

simple ballad by Lady Dufferin, in which she describes the Irish emigrant on the eve of his departure for America coming to the graveyard to say 'Farewell' to his young wife whom he has buried there.

I'm sittin' on the stile, Mary,  
Where we sat side by side  
On a bright May mornin', long ago,  
When first you were my bride:  
The corn was springin' fresh and green,  
An' the lark sang loud and high—  
An the red was on your lip, Mary,  
And the love-light in your eye.

The *place* is little changed, Mary,  
The day is bright as then,  
The lark's loud song is in my ear,  
And the corn is green again;  
But I miss the soft clasp of your hand,  
And your breath, warm on my cheek,  
An' I still keep list'nin' for the words  
You never more will speak.

'Tis but a step down yonder lane,  
And the little church stands near—  
The church where we were wed, Mary,

I see the spire from here.  
But the graveyard lies between, Mary,  
And my step might break your rest—  
For I've laid you, darlin'! down to sleep,  
With your baby on your breast.

I'm very lonely now, Mary,  
For the poor make no new friends;  
But oh! they love the better still  
The few our Father sends:  
And you were all I had, Mary,  
My blessin' and my pride!  
There's nothing left to care for now,  
Since my poor Mary died.

Your's was the good brave heart, Mary,  
That still kept hopin' on,  
When the trust in God had left my soul,  
And my arm's young strength was gone;  
There was comfort ever on your lip,  
And the kind look on your brow—  
I bless you, Mary, for that same,  
Though you cannot hear me now.

I thank you for the patient smile,  
When your heart was fit to break,

When the hunger-pain was gnawin' there  
And you hid it for *my* sake,  
I bless you for the pleasant word,  
When your heart was sad and sore—  
Oh! I'm thankful you are gone, Mary,  
Where grief can't reach you more.

I'm bidding you a long farewell,  
My Mary—kind and true!  
But I'll not forget *you*, darlin',  
In the land I'm going to :  
They say there's bread and work for all,  
And the sun shines always there —  
But I'll not forget old Ireland,  
Were it fifty times as fair!

And often, in those grand old woods,  
I'll sit and shut my eyes,  
And my heart will travel back again  
To the place where Mary lies ;  
And I'll think I'll see the little stile  
Where we sat side by side,  
And the springin' corn, and the bright May morn,  
When first you were my bride.

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